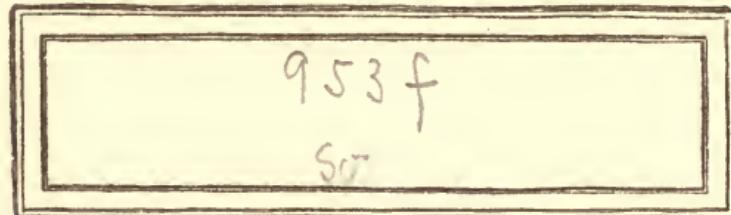
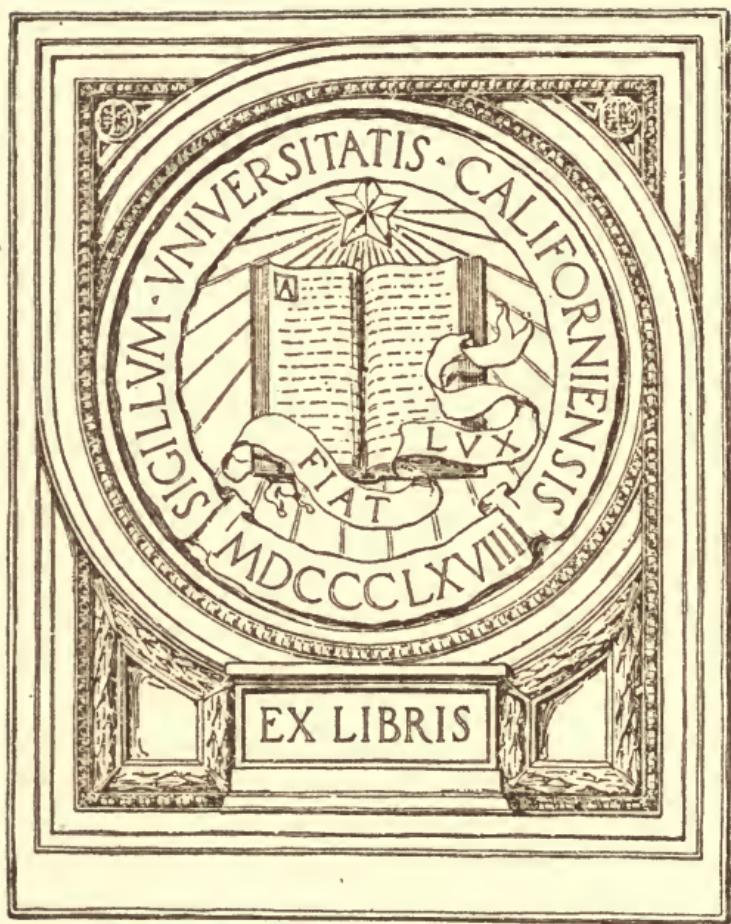


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*Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day.*

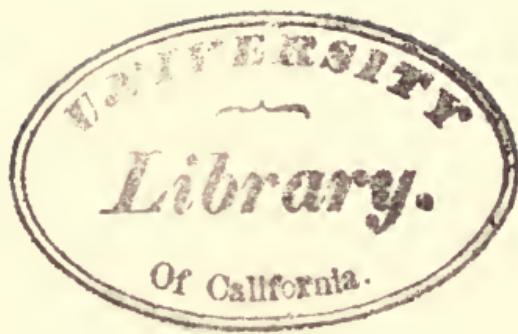
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*Sordello, Strafford,*

*Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day*

BY

ROBERT BROWNING



TICKNOR AND FIELDS

1864



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*Dedication to the New English Edition of Browning's  
Complete Works.*

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*I DEDICATE THESE VOLUMES*

TO

MY OLD FRIEND JOHN FORSTER,

GLAD AND GRATEFUL THAT HE WHO,

FROM THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF THE VARIOUS POEMS THEY INCLUDE,

HAS BEEN THEIR PROMPTEST AND STAUNCHEST HELPER,

SHOULD SEEM EVEN NEARER TO ME NOW

THAN THIRTY YEARS AGO.

R. B.

*London, April 21, 1863.*

7459

To Messrs. TICKNOR AND FIELDS:—

I take advantage of the opportunity of the publication in the United States of my Poems, for printing which you have liberally remunerated me, to express my earnest desire that the power of publishing in America this and every subsequent work of mine may rest exclusively with your house.

I am, my dear Sirs, with high esteem,

Yours faithfully,

ROBERT BROWNING.

## CONTENTS.



	PAGE
SORDELLO . . . . .	I
STRAFFORD . . . . .	217
CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY . . . . .	323



# S O R D E L L O .

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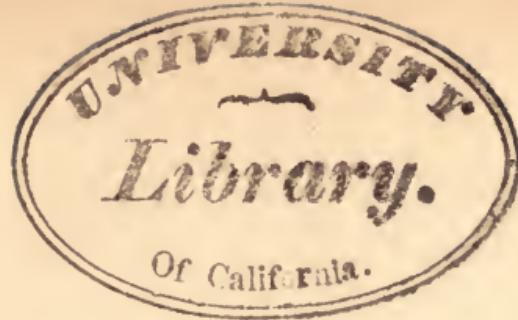
TO J. MILSAND, OF DIJON.

DEAR FRIEND:—

Let this poem be introduced by your name, and so repay all trouble it ever cost me. I wrote it twenty-five years ago for only a few, counting even in these on somewhat more care about its subject than they really had. My own faults of expression were many; but with care for a man or book such would be surmounted, and without it what avails the faultlessness of either? I blame nobody, least of all myself, who did my best then and since; for I lately gave time and pains to turn my work into what the many might—instead of what the few must—like: but after all, I imagined another thing at first, and therefore leave as I find it. The historical decoration was purposely of no more importance than a background requires; and my stress lay on the incidents in the development of a soul: little else is worth study. I, at least, always thought so,—you, with many known and unknown to me, think so,—others may one day think so: and whether my attempt remain for them or not, I trust, though away and past it, to continue ever yours,

R. B.

LONDON, June 9, 1863.



## SORDELLO.

---

### BOOK THE FIRST.

#### A QUIXOTIC ATTEMPT.

Who will, may hear Sordello's story told:  
His story? Who believes me shall behold  
The man, pursue his fortunes to the end,  
Like me: for as the friendless-people's friend  
Spied from his hill-top once, despite the din  
And dust of multitudes, Pentapolin  
Named o' the Naked Arm, I single out  
Sordello, compassed murkily about  
With ravage of six long sad hundred years.  
Only believe me. Ye believe?

Appears

Verona . . . Never, I should warn you first,  
Of my own choice had this, if not the worst  
Yet not the best expedient, served to tell  
A story I could body forth so well  
By making speak, myself kept out of view,  
The very man as he was wont to do,

And leaving you to say the rest for him.  
Since, though I might be proud to see the dim  
Abysmal Past divide its hateful surge,  
Letting of all men this one man emerge  
Because it pleased me, yet, that moment past,  
I should delight in watching first to last  
His progress as you watch it, not a whit  
More in the secret than yourselves who sit  
Fresh-chapleted to listen. But it seems  
Your setters-forth of unexampled themes,  
Makers of quite new men, producing them,  
Would best chalk broadly on each vesture's hem,  
The wearer's quality; or take their stand,  
Motley on back and pointing-pole in hand,  
Beside him. So, for once I face ye, friends,  
Summoned together from the world's four ends,  
Dropped down from heaven or cast up from hell,  
To hear the story I propose to tell.

Confess now, poets know the dragnet's trick,  
Catching the dead, if fate denies the quick,  
And shaming her; 't is not for fate to choose  
Silence or song because she can refuse  
Real eyes to glisten more, real hearts to ache  
Less oft, real brows turn smoother for our sake:  
I have experienced something of her spite;  
But there's a realm wherein she has no right  
And I have many lovers. Say, but few  
Friends fate accords me? Here they are: now view  
The host I muster! Many a lighted face

Foul with no vestige of the grave's disgrace ;  
What else should tempt them back to taste our air  
Except to see how their successors fare ?  
My audience ! and they sit, each ghostly man  
Striving to look as living as he can,  
Brother by breathing brother ; thou art set,  
Clear-witted critic, by . . . but I 'll not fret  
A wondrous soul of them, nor move death's spleen  
Who loves not to unlock them. Friends ! I mean  
The living in good earnest — ye elect  
Chiefly for love — suppose not I reject  
Judicious praise, who contrary shall peep,  
Some fit occasion, forth, for fear ye sleep,  
To glean your bland approvals. Then, appear,  
Verona ! stay — thou, spirit, come not near  
Now — not this time desert thy cloudy place  
To scare me, thus employed, with that pure face ! .  
I need not fear this audience, I make free  
With them, but then this is no place for thee !  
The thunder-phrase of the Athenian, grown  
Up out of memories of Marathon,  
Would echo like his own sword's griding screech  
Braying a Persian shield, — the silver speech  
Of Sidney's self, the starry paladin,  
Turn intense as a trumpet sounding in  
The knights to tilt, — wert thou to hear ! What heart  
Have I to play my puppets, bear my part  
Before these worthies ?

Lo, the Past is hurled

In twain : up-thrust, out-staggering on the world,  
Subsiding into shape, a darkness rears  
Its outline, kindles at the core, appears  
Verona. 'T is six hundred years and more  
Since an event. The Second Friedrich wore  
The purple, and the Third Honorius filled  
The holy chair. That autumn eve was stilled :  
A last remains of sunset dimly burned  
O'er the far forests, like a torch-flame turned  
By the wind back upon its bearer's hand  
In one long flare of crimson ; as a brand,  
The woods beneath lay black. A single eye  
From all Verona cared for the soft sky.  
But, gathering in its ancient market-place,  
Talked group with restless group ; and not a face  
But wrath made livid, for among them were  
Death's stanch purveyors, such as have in care  
To feast him. Fear had long since taken root  
In every breast, and now these crushed its fruit,  
The ripe hate, like a wine : to note the way  
It worked while each grew drunk ! men grave and gray  
Stood, with shut eyelids, rocking to and fro,  
Letting the silent luxury trickle slow  
About the hollows where a heart should be ;  
But the young gulped with a delirious glee  
Some foretaste of their first debauch in blood  
At the fierce news : for, be it understood,  
Envoy apprised Verona that her prince  
Count Richard of Saint Boniface, joined since

A year with Azzo, Este's Lord, to thrust  
Taurello Salinguerra, prime in trust  
With Ecelin Romano, from his seat  
Ferrara, — over zealous in thefeat  
And stumbling on a peril unaware,  
Was captive, trammelled in his proper snare,  
They phrase it, taken by his own intrigue.  
Immediate succor from the Lombard League  
Of fifteen cities that affect the Pope,  
For Azzo, therefore, and his fellow-hope  
Of the Guelf cause, a glory overcast !  
Men's faces, late agape, are now aghast.  
" Prone is the purple pavis ; Este makes  
Mirth for the devil when he undertakes  
To play the Ecelin ; as if it cost  
Merely your pushing-by to gain a post  
Like his ! The patron tells ye, once for all,  
There be sound reasons that preferment fall  
On our beloved " . . .

" Duke o' the Rood, why not ? "

Shouted an Estian, " grudge ye such a lot ?  
The hill-cat boasts some cunning of her own,  
Some stealthy trick to better beasts unknown,  
That quick with prey enough her hunger blunts,  
And feeds her fat while gaunt the lion hunts."

" Taurello," quoth an envoy, " as in wane  
Dwelt at Ferrara. Like an osprey fain  
To fly but forced the earth his couch to make  
Far inland, till his friend the tempest wake,

Waits he the Kaiser's coming ; and as yet  
That fast friend sleeps, and he too sleeps : but let  
Only the billow freshen, and he snuffs  
The aroused hurricane ere it enroughs  
The sea it means to cross because of him.  
Sinketh the breeze ? His hope-sick eye grows dim ;  
Creep closer on the creature ! Every day  
Strengthens the Pontiff ; Ecelin, they say,  
Dozes now at Oliero, with dry lips  
Telling upon his perished finger-tips  
How many ancestors are to depose  
Ere he be Satan's Viceroy when the doze  
Deposits him in hell. So, Guelfs rebuilt  
Their houses ; not a drop of blood was spilt  
When Cino Bocchimpane chanced to meet  
Buccio Virtù — God's wafer, and the street  
Is narrow ! Tutti Santi, think, a-swarm  
With Ghibellins, and yet he took no harm !  
This could not last. Off Salinguerra went  
To Padua, Podestà, 'with pure intent,'  
Said he, 'my presence, judged the single bar  
To permanent tranquillity, may jar  
No longer' — so ! his back is fairly turned ?  
The pair of goodly palaces are burned,  
The gardens ravaged, and our Guelfs laugh, drunk  
A week with joy. The next, their laughter sunk  
In sobs of blood, for they found, some strange way,  
Old Salinguerra back again — I say,  
Old Salinguerra in the town once more

Uprooting, overturning, flame before,  
Blood fetlock-high beneath him. Azzo fled ;  
Who scaped the carnage followed ; then the dead  
Were pushed aside from Salinguerra's throne,  
He ruled oncé more Ferrara, all alone.

Till Azzo, stunned awhile, revived, would pounce  
Coupled with Boniface, like lynx and ounce,  
On the gorged bird. The burghers ground their teeth  
To see troop after troop encamp beneath  
I' the standing corn thick o'er the scanty patch  
It took so many patient months to snatch  
Out of the marsh ; while just within their walls  
Men fed on men. At length Taurello calls  
A parley : 'let the Count wind up the war !'  
Richard, light-hearted as a plunging-star,  
Agrees to enter for the kindest ends  
Ferrara, flanked with fifty chosen friends,  
No horse-boy more, for fear your timid sort  
Should fly Ferrara at the bare report.

Quietly through the town they rode, jog-jog ;  
'Ten, twenty, thirty, — curse the catalogue  
Of burnt Guelf houses ! Strange, Taurello shows  
Not the least sign of life ' — whereat arose  
A general growl : ' How ? With his victors by ?  
I and my Veronese ? My troops and I ?  
Receive us, was your word ? ' So jogged they on,  
Nor laughed their host too openly : once gone  
Into the trap ! —

Six hundred years ago !

Such the time's aspect and peculiar woe  
(Yourselves may spell it yet in chronicles,  
Albeit the worm, our busy brother, drills  
His sprawling path through letters anciently  
Made fine and large to suit some abbot's eye)  
When the new Hohenstauffen dropped the mask,  
Flung John of Brienne's favor from his casque,  
Forswore crusading, had no mind to leave  
Saint Peter's proxy leisure to retrieve  
Losses to Otho and to Barbaross,  
Or make the Alps less easy to recross ;  
And, thus confirming Pope Honorius' fear,  
Was excommunicate that very year.

“ The triple-bearded Teuton come to life ! ”  
Groaned the Great League ; and, arming for the strife,  
Wide Lombardy, on tiptoe to begin,  
Took up, as it was Guelf or Ghibellin,  
Its cry ; what cry ?

“ The Emperor to come ! ”

His crowd of feudatories, all and some,  
That leapt down with a crash of swords, spears, shields,  
One fighter on his fellow, to our fields,  
Scattered anon, took station here and there,  
And carried it, till now, with little care —  
Cannot but cry for him ; how else rebut  
Us longer ? Cliffs, an earthquake suffered jut  
In the mid-sea, each domineering crest,  
Nothing save such another throe can wrest  
From out (conceive) a certain chokeweed grown

Since o'er the waters, twine and tangle thrown  
 Too thick, too fast accumulating round,  
 Too sure to over-riot and confound  
 Ere long each brilliant islet with itself  
 Unless a second shock save shoal and shelf,  
 Whirling the sea-drift wide : alas, the bruised  
 And sullen wreck ! Sunlight to be diffused  
 For that ! Sunlight, 'neath which, a scum at first,  
 The million fibres of our chokeweed nurst  
 Dispread themselves, mantling the troubled main,  
 And, shattered by those rocks, took hold again,  
 So kindly blazed it — that same blaze to brood  
 O'er every cluster of the multitude  
 Still hazarding new clasps, ties, filaments,  
 An emulous exchange of pulses, vents  
 Of nature into nature ; till some growth  
 Unfancied yet, exuberantly clothe  
 A surface solid now, continuous, one :  
 "The Pope, for us the People, who begun  
 The People, carries on the People thus,  
 To keep that Kaiser off and dwell with us !"  
 See you ?

Or say, Two Principles that live  
 Each fitly by its Representative.  
 "Hill-cat" — who called him so ? — the gracefulest  
 Adventurer, the ambiguous stranger-guest  
 Of Lombardy (sleek but that ruffling fur,  
 Those talons to their sheath !) whose velvet purr  
 Soothes jealous neighbors when a Saxon scout

— Arpo or Yoland, is it? — one without  
A country or a name, presumes to couch  
Beside their noblest; until men avouch  
That, of all Houses in the Trevisan,  
Conrad descries no fitter, rear or van,  
Than Ecelo! They laughed as they enrolled  
That name at Milan on the page of gold,  
Godego's lord, — Ramon, Marostica,  
Cartiglion, Bassano, Loria,  
And every sheep-cote on the Suabian's fief!  
No laughter when his son, “the Lombard Chief”  
Forsooth, as Barbarossa's path was bent  
To Italy along the Vale of Trent,  
Welcomed him at Roncaglia! Sadness now —  
The hamlets nested on the Tyrol's brow,  
The Asolan and Euganean hills,  
The Rhetian and the Julian, sadness fills  
Them all, for Ecelin vouchsafes to stay  
Among and care about them; day by day  
Choosing this pinnacle, the other spot,  
A castle building to defend a cot,  
A cot built for a castle to defend,  
Nothing but castles, castles, nor an end  
To boasts how mountain ridge may join with ridge  
By sunken gallery and soaring bridge.  
He takes, in brief, a figure that beseems  
The griesliest nightmare of the Church's dreams,  
— A Signory firm-rooted, unestranged  
From its old interests, and nowise changed

By its new neighborhood ; perchance the vaunt  
Of Otho, "my own Este shall supplant  
Your Este," come to pass. The sire led in  
A son as cruel ; and this Ecelin  
Had sons, in turn, and daughters sly and tall,  
And curling and compliant ; but for all  
Romano (so they styled him) throve, that 'neck  
Of his so pinched and white, that hungry cheek  
Proved 't was some fiend, not him, the man's-flesh went  
To feed : whereas Romano's instrument,  
Famous Taurello Salinguerra, sole  
I' the world, a tree whose boughs were slipt the bole  
Successively, why should not he shed blood  
To further a design ? Men understood  
Living was pleasant to him as he wore  
His careless surcoat, glanced some missive o'er,  
Propped on his truncheon in the public way,  
While his lord lifted writhen hands to pray,  
Lost at Oliero's convent.

Hill-cats, face

With Azzo, our Guelf Lion ! — nor disgrace  
A worthiness conspicuous near and far  
(Atii at Rome while free and consular,  
Este at Padua who repulsed the Hun)  
By trumpeting the Church's princely son  
Styled Patron of Rovigo's Polesine,  
Ancona's March, Ferrara's . . . ask, in fine,  
Our chronicles, commenced when some old monk  
Found it intolerable to be sunk

(Vexed to the quick by his revolting cell)  
Quite out of summer while alive and well :  
Ended when by his mat the Prior stood,  
'Mid busy promptings of the brotherhood,  
Striving to coax from his decrepit brains  
The reason Father Porphyry took pains  
To blot those ten lines out which used to stand  
First on their charter drawn by Hildebrand.

The same night wears. Verona's rule of yore  
Was vested in a certain Twenty-four ;  
And while within his palace these debate  
Concerning Richard and Ferrara's fate,  
Glide we by clapping doors, with sudden glare  
Of cressets vented on the dark, nor care  
For aught that 's seen or heard until we shut  
The smother in, the lights, all noises but  
The carroch's booming : safe at last ! Why strange  
Such a recess should lurk behind a range  
Of banquet-rooms ? Your finger — thus — you push  
A spring, and the wall opens, would you rush  
Upon the banqueters, select your prey,  
Waiting, the slaughter-weapons in the way  
Strewing this very bench, with sharpened ear  
A preconcerted signal to appear ;  
Or if you simply crouch with beating heart,  
Bearing in some voluptuous pageant part  
To startle them. Nor mutes nor masquers now ;  
Nor any . . . does that one man sleep whose brow  
The dying lamp-flame sinks and rises o'er ?

What woman stood beside him? not the more  
Is he unfastened from the earnest eyes  
Because that arras fell between? Her wise  
And lulling words are yet about the room,  
Her presence wholly poured upon the gloom  
Down even to her vesture's creeping stir.  
And so reclines he, saturate with her,  
Until an outcry from the square beneath  
Pierces the charm: he springs up, glad to breathe  
Above the cunning element, and shakes  
The stupor off as (look you) morning breaks  
On the gay dress, and, near concealed by it,  
The lean frame like a half-burnt taper, lit  
Erst at some marriage-feast, then laid away  
Till the Armenian bridegroom's dying-day,  
In his wool wedding-robe. For he — for he,  
Gate-vein of this hearts' blood of Lombardy,  
→ (If I should falter now) — for he is Thine!  
Sordello, thy forerunner, Florentine!  
A herald-star I know thou didst absorb  
Relentless into the consummate orb  
That scared it from its right to roll along  
A sempiternal path with dance and song  
Fulfilling its allotted period,  
Serenest of the progeny of God!  
Who yet resigns it not; His darling stoops  
With no quenched lights, despends with no blank troops  
Of disenfranchised brilliances, for, blent  
Utterly with thee, its shy element

Like thine upburneth prosperous and clear.  
Still, what if I approach the august sphere  
Named now with only one name, disentwine  
That under-current soft and argentine  
From its fierce mate in the majestic mass  
Leavened as the sea whose fire was mixt with glass  
In John's transcendent vision,— launch once more  
That lustre ? Dante, pacer of the shore  
Where glutted hell disgorgeth filthiest gloom,  
Unbitten by its whirring sulphur-spume —  
Or whence the grieved and obscure waters slope  
Into a darkness quieted by hope ;  
Plucker of amaranths grown beneath God's eye  
In gracious twilights where His chosen lie,  
I would do this ! if I should falter now !

In Mantua-territory half is slough  
Half pine-tree forest ; maples, scarlet-oaks  
Breed o'er the river-beds ; even Mincio chokes  
With sand the summer through ; but 't is morass  
In winter up to Mantua walls. There was,  
Some thirty years before this evening's coil,  
One spot reclaimed from the surrounding spoil,  
Goito ; just a castle built amid  
A few low mountains ; firs and larches hid  
Their main defiles, and rings of vineyard bound  
The rest. Some captured creature in a pound,  
Whose artless wonder quite precludes distress,  
Secure beside in its own loveliness,  
So peered with airy head, below, above,

The castle at its toils, the lapwings love  
To glean among at grape-time. Pass within.  
A maze of corridors contrived for sin,  
Dusk winding-stairs, dim galleries got past,  
You gain the inmost chambers, gain at last  
A maple-panelled room: that haze which seems  
Floating about the panel, if there gleams  
A sunbeam over it, will turn to gold  
And in light-graven characters unfold  
The Arab's wisdom everywhere; what shade  
Marred them a moment, those slim pillars made,  
Cut like a company of palms to prop  
The roof, each kissing top entwined with top,  
Leaning together; in the carver's mind  
Some knot of bacchanals, flushed cheek combined  
With straining forehead, shoulders purpled, hair  
Diffused between, who in a goat-skin bear  
A vintage; graceful sister-palms! But quick  
To the main wonder, now. A vault, see; thick  
Black shade about the ceiling, though fine slits  
Across the buttress suffer light by fits  
Upon a marvel in the midst. Nay, stoop—  
A dullish gray-streaked cumbrous font, a group  
Round it, each side of it, where'er one sees,  
Upholds it—shrinking Caryatides  
Of just-tinged marble like Eve's lilyed flesh  
Beneath her Maker's finger when the fresh  
First pulse of life shot brightening the snow.  
The font's edge burdens every shoulder, so

They muse upon the ground, eyelids half closed ;  
Some, with meek arms behind their backs disposed,  
Some, crossed above their bosoms, some, to veil  
Their eyes, some, propping chin and cheek so pale,  
Some, hanging slack an utter helpless length  
Dead as a buried vestal whose whole strength  
Goes when the grate above shuts heavily.  
So dwell these noiseless girls, patient to see,  
Like priestesses because of sin impure  
Penanced for ever, who resigned endure,  
Having that once drunk sweetness to the aregs.  
And every eve, Sordello's visit begs  
Pardon for them : constant as eve he came  
To sit beside each in her turn, the same  
As one of them, a certain space : and awe  
Made a great indistinctness till he saw  
Sunset slant cheerful through the buttress-chinks,  
Gold seven times globed ; surely our maiden shrinks  
And a smile stirs her as if one faint grain  
Her load were lightened, one shade less the stain  
Obscured her forehead, yet one more bead slipt  
From off the rosary whereby the crypt  
Keeps count of the contritions of its charge ?  
Then with a step more light, a heart more large,  
He may depart, leave her and every one  
To linger out the penance in mute stone.  
Ah, but Sordello ? 'T is the tale I mean  
To tell you. In this castle may be seen,  
On the hill-tops, or underneath the vines,

Or eastward by the mound of firs and pines  
That shuts out Mantua, still in loneliness,  
A slender boy in a loose page's dress,  
Sordello : do but look on him awhile  
Watching ('t is autumn) with an earnest smile  
The noisy flock of thievish birds at work  
Among the yellowing vineyards ; see him lurk  
('T is winter with its sullenest of storms)  
Beside that arras-length of broidered forms,  
On tiptoe, lifting in both hands a light  
Which makes yon warrior's visage flutter bright  
— Ecelo, dismal father of the brood,  
And Ecelin, close to the girl he wooed,  
Auria, and their Child, with all his wives  
From Agnes to the Tuscan that survives,  
Lady of the castle, Adelaide. His face  
— Look, now he turns away ! Yourselves shall trace  
(The delicate nostril swerving wide and fine,  
A sharp and restless lip, so well combine  
With that calm brow) a soul fit to receive  
Delight at every sense ; you can believe  
Sordello foremost in the regal class  
Nature has broadly severed from her mass  
Of men, and framed for pleasure, as she frames  
Some happy lands, that have luxurious names,  
For loose fertility ; a footfall there  
Suffices to upturn to the warm air  
Half-germinating spices ; mere decay  
Produces richer life ; and day by day

New pollen on the lily-petal grows,  
And still more labyrinthine buds the rose.  
You recognize at once the finer dress  
Of flesh that amply lets in loveliness  
At eye and ear, while round the rest is furled  
(As though she would not trust them with her world)  
A veil that shows a sky not near so blue,  
And lets but half the sun look fervid through.  
How can such love? — like souls on each full-fraught  
Discovery brooding, blind at first to aught  
Beyond its beauty, till exceeding love  
Becomes an aching weight; and, to remove  
A curse that haunts such natures — to preclude  
Their finding out themselves can work no good  
To what they love nor make it very blest  
By their endeavor, — they are fain invest  
The lifeless thing with life from their own soul,  
Availing it to purpose, to control,  
To dwell distinct and have peculiar joy  
And separate interests that may employ  
That beauty fitly, for its proper sake.  
Nor rest they here; fresh births of beauty wake  
Fresh homage, every grade of love is past,  
With every mode of loveliness: then cast  
Inferior idols off their borrowed crown  
Before a coming glory. Up and down  
Runs arrowy fire, while earthly forms combine  
To throb the secret forth; a touch divine —  
And the sealed eyeball owns the mystic rod:

Visibly through His garden walketh God.  
So fare they. Now revert. One character  
Denotes them through the progress and the stir,—  
A need to blend with each external charm,  
Bury themselves, the whole heart wide and warm,  
In something not themselves; they would belong  
To what they worship — stronger and more strong  
Thus prodigally fed — which gathers shape  
And feature, soon imprisons past escape  
The votary framed to love and to submit  
Nor ask, as passionately he kneels to it,  
Whence grew the idol's empery. So runs  
A legend: light had birth ere moons and suns,  
Flowing through space a river and alone,  
Till chaos burst and blank the spheres were strown  
Hither and thither, foundering and blind,  
When into each of them rushed light — to find  
Itself no place, foiled of its radiant chance.  
Let such forego their just inheritance!  
For there's a class that eagerly looks, too,  
On beauty, but, unlike the gentler crew,  
Proclaims each new revealment born a twin  
With a distinctest consciousness within  
Referring still the quality, now first  
Revealed, to their own soul — its instinct nursed  
In silence, now remembered better, shown  
More thoroughly, but not the less their own;  
A dream come true; the special exercise  
Of any special function that implies

The being fair, or good, or wise, or strong,  
 Dormant within their nature all along—  
 Whose fault? So, homage, other souls direct  
 Without, turns inward; “How should this deject  
 Thee, soul?” they murmur; “wherefore strength  
 quelled

Because, its trivial accidents withheld,  
 Organs are missed that clog the world, inert,  
 Wanting a will, to quicken and exert,  
 Like thine—existence cannot satiate,  
 Cannot surprise? laugh thou at envious fate,  
 Who, from earth’s simplest combination stampt  
 With individuality—uncrampt  
 By living its faint elemental life,  
 Dost soar to heaven’s completest essence, rife  
 With grandeurs, unaffronted to the last,  
 Equal to being all!”

In truth? Thou hast  
 Life, then—wilt challenge life for us: our race  
 Is vindicated so, obtains its place  
 In thy ascent, the first of us; whom we  
 May follow, to the meanest, finally,  
 With our more bounded wills?

Ah, but to find  
 A certain mood enervate such a mind,  
 Counsel it slumber in the solitude  
 Thus reached nor, stooping, task for mankind’s good  
 Its nature just as life and time accord  
 “—Too narrow an arena to reward

Emprise — the world's occasion worthless since  
Not absolutely fitted to evince  
Its mastery !” Or if yet worse befall,  
And a desire possess it to put all  
That nature forth, forcing our straitened sphere  
Contain it, — to display completely here  
The mastery another life should learn,  
Thrusting in time eternity's concern, —  
So that Sordello . . . Fool, who spied the mark  
Of leprosy upon him, violet-dark  
Already as he loiters ? Born just now,  
With the new century, beside the glow  
And efflorescence out of barbarism ;  
Witness a Greek or two from the abysm  
That stray through Florence-town with studious air,  
Calming the chisel of that Pisan pair :  
If Nicolo should carve a Christus yet !  
While at Siena is Guidone set,  
Forehead on hand ; a painful birth must be  
Matured ere Saint Eufemia's sacristy  
Or transept gather fruits of one great gaze  
At the moon : look you ! The same orange haze, —  
The same blue stripe round that — and, i' the midst,  
Thy spectral whiteness, Mother-maid, who didst  
Pursue the dizzy painter !

Woe, then, worth

Any officious babble letting forth  
The leprosy confirmed and ruinous  
To spirit lodged in a contracted house !

Go back to the beginning, rather ; blend  
It gently with Sordello's life ; the end  
Is piteous, you may see, but much between  
Pleasant enough. Meantime, some pyx to screen  
The full-grown pest, some lid to shut upon  
The goblin ! So they found at Babylon,  
(Colleagues, mad Lucius and sage Antonine)  
Sacking the city, by Apollo's shrine,  
In rummaging among the rarities,  
A certain coffer ; he who made the prize  
Opened it greedily ; and out there curled  
Just such another plague, for half the world  
Was stung. Crawl in then, hag, and couch asquat,  
Keeping that blotchy bosom thick in spot  
Until your time is ripe ! The coffer-lid  
Is fastened, and the coffer safely hid  
Under the Loxian's choicest gifts of gold.

Who will may hear Sordello's story told,  
And how he never could remember when  
He dwelt not at Goito. Calmly, then,  
About this secret lodge of Adelaide's  
Glided his youth away ; beyond the glades  
On the fir-forest's border, and the rim  
Of the low range of mountain, was for him  
No other world : but this appeared his own  
To wander through at pleasure and alone.  
The castle too seemed empty ; far and wide  
Might he disport ; only the northern side  
Lay under a mysterious interdict —

Slight, just enough remembered to restrict  
His roaming to the corridors, the vault  
Where those font-bearers expiate their fault,  
The maple-chamber, and the little nooks  
And nests, and breezy parapet that looks  
Over the woods to Mantua: there he strolled.  
Some foreign women-servants, very old,  
Tended and crept about him — all his clew  
To the world's business and embroiled ado  
Distant a dozen hill-tops at the most.

And first a simple sense of life engrossed  
Sordello in his drowsy Paradise;  
The day's adventures for the day suffice —  
Its constant tribute of perceptions strange,  
With sleep and stir in healthy interchange,  
Suffice, and leave him for the next at ease  
Like the great palmer-worm that strips the trees,  
Eats the life out of every luscious plant,  
And, when September finds them sere or scant,  
Puts forth two wondrous winglets, alters quite,  
And hies him after unforeseen delight.  
So fed Sordello, not a shard disheathed;  
As ever, round each new discovery, wreathed  
Luxuriantly the fancies infantine  
His admiration, bent on making fine  
Its novel friend at any risk, would fling  
In gay profusion forth: a ficklest king,  
Confessed those minions! Eager to dispense  
So much from his own stock of thought and sense

As might enable each to stand alone  
And serve him for a fellow ; with his own,  
Joining the qualities that just before  
Had graced some older favorite. Thus they wore  
A fluctuating halo, yesterday  
Set flicker and to-morrow filched away, —  
Those upland objects each of separate name,  
Each with an aspect never twice the same,  
Waxing and waning as the new-born host  
Of fancies, like a single night's hoar-frost,  
Gave to familiar things a face grotesque ;  
Only, preserving through the mad burlesque  
A grave regard. Conceive ! the orpine-patch  
Blossoming earliest on the log-house-thatch  
The day those archers wound along the vines —  
Related to the Chief that left their lines  
To climb with clinking step the northern stair  
Up to the solitary chambers where  
Sordello never came. Thus thrall reached thrall ;  
He o'er-festooning every interval,  
As the adventurous spider, making light  
Of distance, shoots her threads from depth to height,  
From barbican to battlement ; so flung  
Fantasies forth and in their centre swung  
Our architect, — the breezy morning fresh  
Above, and merry, — all his waving mesh  
Laughing with lucid dew-drops rainbow-edged.  
This world of ours by tacit pact is pledged  
To laying such a spangled fabric low

Whether by gradual brush or gallant blow.  
But its abundant will was balked here: doubt  
Rose tardily in one so fenced about  
From most that nurtures judgment, care and pain:  
Judgment, that dull expedient we are fain,  
Less favored, to adopt betimes and force  
Stead us, diverted from our natural course  
Of joys,— contrive some yet amid the dearth,  
Vary and render them, it may be, worth  
Most we forego. Suppose Sordello hence  
Selfish enough, without a moral sense  
However feeble; what informed the boy  
Others desired a portion in his joy?  
Or say a ruthful chance broke woof and warp —  
A heron's nest beat down by March winds sharp,  
A fawn breathless beneath the precipice,  
A bird with unsoiled breast and filmless eyes  
Warm in the brake — could these undo the trance  
Lapping Sordello? Not a circumstance  
That makes for you, friend Naddo! Eat fern-seed  
And peer beside us and report indeed  
If (your word) "genius" dawned with throes and  
stings  
And the whole fiery catalogue, while springs  
Summers and winters quietly came and went.  
Time put at length that period to content,  
By right the world should have imposed: bereft  
Of its good offices, Sordello, left  
To study his companions, managed rip

Their fringe off, learn the true relationship,  
Core with its crust, their natures with his own :  
Amid his wild-wood sights he lived alone.  
As if the poppy felt with him ! Though he  
Partook the poppy's red effrontery  
Till Autumn spoiled their fleering quite with rain,  
And, turbanless, a coarse brown rattling crane  
Lay bare. That's gone ! Yet why renounce, for  
that,  
His disenchanted tributaries — flat  
Perhaps, but scarce so utterly forlorn,  
Their simple presence might not well be borne  
Whose parley was a transport once : recall  
The poppy's gifts, it flaunts you, after all,  
A poppy : why distrust the evidence  
Of each soon satisfied and healthy sense ?  
The new-born judgment answered : " little boots  
Beholding other creatures' attributes  
And having none !" or, say that it sufficed,  
" Yet, could one but possess, one's self," (enticed  
Judgment) " some special office !" Naught beside  
Serves you ? " Well, then, be somehow justified  
For this ignoble wish to circumscribe  
And concentrate, rather than swell, the tribe  
Of actual pleasures : what, now, from without  
Effects it ? — proves, despite a lurking doubt,  
Mere sympathy sufficient, trouble spared ?  
That tasting joys by proxy thus, you fared  
The better for them ? " Thus much craved his soul.

Alas, from the beginning love is whole  
And true ; if sure of naught beside, most sure  
Of its own truth at least ; nor may endure  
A crowd to see its face, that cannot know  
How hot the pulses throb its heart below.  
While its own helplessness and utter want  
Of means to worthily be ministrant  
To what it worships, do but fan the more  
Its flame, exalt the idol far before  
Itself as it would have it ever be.  
Souls like Sordello, on the contrary,  
Coerced and put to shame, retaining will,  
Care little, take mysterious comfort still,  
But look forth tremblingly to ascertain  
If others judge their claims not urged in vain,  
And say for them their stifled thoughts aloud.  
So, they must ever live before a crowd :  
— “Vanity,” Naddo tells you.

Whence contrive

A crowd, now ? From these women just alive,  
That archer-troop ? Forth glided — not alone  
Each painted warrior, every girl of stone,  
Nor Adelaide (bent double o'er a scroll,  
One maiden at her knees, that eve, his soul  
Shook as he stumbled through the arras'd glooms  
On them, for, 'mid quaint robes and weird perfumes,  
Started the meagre Tuscan up, — her eyes,  
The maiden's, also, bluer with surprise)  
— But the entire out-world : whatever, scraps

And snatches, song and story, dreams perhaps,  
Conceited the world's offices, and he  
Had hitherto transferred to flower or tree,  
Nor counted a befitting heritage  
Each, of its own right, singly to engage  
Some man, no other, — such now dared to stand  
Alone. Strength, wisdom, grace on every hand  
Soon disengaged themselves, and he discerned  
A sort of human life . at least, was turned  
A stream of lifelike figures through his brain.  
Lord, liegeman, valvassor and suzerain,  
Ere he could choose, surrounded him ; a stuff  
To work his pleasure on ; there, sure enough :  
But as for gazing, what shall fix that gaze ?  
Are they to simply testify the ways  
He who convoked them sends his soul along  
With the cloud's thunder or a dove's brood-song ?  
— While they live each his life, boast each his own  
Peculiar dower of bliss, stand each alone  
In some one point where something dearest loved  
Is easiest gained — far worthier to be proved  
Than aught he envies in the forest-wights !  
No simple and self-evident delights,  
But mixed desires of unimagined range,  
Contrasts or combinations, new and strange,  
Irksome perhaps, yet plainly recognized  
By this, the sudden company — loves prized  
By those who are to prize his own amount  
Of loves. Once care because such make account,

Allow a foreign recognition stamp  
The current value, and his crowd shall vamp  
Him counterfeits enough ; and so their print  
Be on the piece, 't is gold, attests the mint,  
And "good," pronounce they whom his new appeal  
Is made to : if their casual print conceal —  
This arbitrary good of theirs o'ergloss  
What he have lived without, nor felt the loss —  
Qualities strange, ungainly, wearisome,  
— What matter? so must speech expand the dumb  
Part-sigh, part-smile with which Sordello, late  
No foolish woodland-sights could satiate,  
Betakes himself to study hungrily  
Just what the puppets his crude fantasy  
Supposes notablest, popes, kings, priests, knights,  
May please to promulgate for appetites ;  
Accepting all their artificial joys  
Not as he views them, but as he employs  
Each shape to estimate the other's stock .  
Of attributes, that on a marshalled flock  
Of authorized enjoyments he may spend  
Himself, be men, now, as he used to blend  
With tree and flower — nay more entirely, else  
'T were mockery : for instance, " how excels  
My life that chieftain's ? " (who apprised the youth  
Ecelin, here, becomes this month, in truth,  
Imperial Vicar?) " Turns he in his tent  
Remissly ? Be it so — my head is bent  
Deliciously amid my girls to sleep.

What if he stalks the Trentine-pass? Yon steep  
I climbed an hour ago with little toil—  
We are alike there. But can I, too, foil  
The Guelfs' paid stabber, carelessly afford  
Saint Mark's a spectacle, the sleight o' the sword  
Baffling their project in a moment?" Here  
No rescue! Poppy he is none, but peer  
To Ecelin, assuredly: his hand,  
Fashioned no otherwise, should wield a brand  
With Ecelin's success — try, now! He soon  
Was satisfied, returned as to the moon  
From earth; left each abortive boy's-attempt  
For feats, from failure happily exempt,  
In fancy at his beck. "One day I will  
Accomplish it! Are they not older still  
— Not grown up men and women? 'T is beside  
Only a dream; and though I must abide  
With dreams now, I may find a thorough vent  
For all myself, acquire an instrument  
For acting what these people act; my soul  
Hunting a body out, may gain its whole  
Desire some day!" How else express chagrin  
And resignation, show the hope steal in  
With which he let sink from an aching wrist  
The rough-hewn ash bow? straight, a gold shaft hissed  
Into the Syrian air, struck Malek down  
Superbly! "Crosses to the breach! God's Town  
Is gained Him back!" Why bend rough ash-bows  
more?

Thus lives he: if not careless as before,  
Comforted: for one may anticipate,  
Rehearse the Future, be prepared when fate  
Shall have prepared in turn real men whose names  
Startle, real places of enormous fames,  
Este abroad and Ecelin at home  
To worship him,— Mantua, Verona, Rome  
To witness it. Who grudges time so spent?  
Rather test qualities to heart's content—  
Summon them, thrice selected, near and far—  
Compress the starriest into one star,  
And grasp the whole at once!

## The pageant thinned

Accordingly; from rank to rank, like wind  
His spirit passed to winnow and divide;  
Back fell the simpler phantasms; every side  
The strong clave to the wise; with either classed  
The beauteous; so, till two or three amassed  
Mankind's beseemingnesses, and reduced  
Themselves eventually, graces loosed,  
And lavished strengths, to heighten up One Shape  
Whose potency no creature should escape.  
Can it be Friedrich of the bowmen's talk?  
Surely that grape-juice, bubbling at the stalk,  
Is some gray scorching Saracenic wine  
The Kaiser quaffs with the Miramoline—  
Those swarthy hazel-clusters, seamed and chapped,  
Or filberts russet-sheathed and velvet-capped,  
Are dates plucked from the bough John Brienne sent,

To keep in mind his sluggish armament  
Of Canaan.—Friedrich's, all the pomp and fierce  
Demeanor ! But harsh sounds and sights transpierce  
So rarely the serene cloud where he dwells,  
Whose looks enjoin, whose lightest words are spells  
On the obdurate ! That right arm indeed  
Has thunder for its slave ; but where 's the need  
Of thunder if the stricken multitude  
Hearkens, arrested in its angriest mood,  
While songs go up exulting, then disspread,  
Dispart, disperse, lingering overhead  
Like an escape of angels ? 'T is the tune,  
Nor much unlike the words the women croon  
Smilingly, colorless and faint-designed  
Each, as a worn-out queen's face some remind  
Of her extreme youth's love-tales. "E glamor  
Made that !" Half minstrel and half emperor,  
What but ill objects vexed him ? Such he slew.  
The kinder sort were easy to subdue  
By those ambrosial glances, dulcet tones ;  
And these a gracious hand advanced to thrones  
Beneath him. Wherefore twist and torture this,  
Striving to name afresh the antique bliss,  
Instead of saying, neither less nor more,  
He had discovered, as our world before,  
Apollo ? That shall be the name ; nor bid  
Me rag by rag expose how patchwork hid  
The youth — what thefts of every clime and day  
Contributed to purfle the array

He climbed with (June at deep) some close ravine  
 'Mid clatter of its million pebbles sheen,  
 Over which, singing soft, the runnel slipt  
 Elate with rains: into whose streamlet dipt  
 He foot, yet trod, you thought, with unwet sock —  
 Though really on the stubs of living rock  
 Ages ago it crenneled; vines for roof,  
 Lindens for wall; before him, aye aloof,  
 Flittered in the cool some azure damsel-fly,  
 Born of the simmering quiet, there to die.  
 Emerging whence, Apollo still, he spied  
 Mighty descents of forest; multiplied  
 Tuft on tuft, here, the frolic myrtle-trees,  
 There gendered the grave maple-stocks at ease.  
 And, proud of its observer, strait the wood  
 Tried old surprises on him; black it stood  
 A sudden barrier ('t was a cloud passed o'er)  
 So dead and dense, the tiniest brute no more  
 Must pass; yet presently (the cloud despatched)  
 Each clump, behold, was glistering detached  
 A shrub, oak-boles shrunk into ilex-stems!  
 Yet could not he denounce the stratagems  
 He saw thro', till, hours thence, aloft would hang  
 White summer-lightnings; as it sank and sprang  
 To measure, that whole palpitating breast  
 Of heaven, 't was Apollo, nature prest  
 At eve to worship.

Time stole: by degrees  
 The Pythons perish off; his votaries

Sink to respectful distance ; songs redeem  
Their pains, but briefer ; their dismissals seem  
Emphatic ; only girls are very slow  
To disappear — his Delians ! Some that glow  
O' the instant, more with earlier loves to wrench  
Away, reserves to quell, disdains to quench ;  
Alike in one material circumstance —  
All soon or late adore Apollo ! Glance  
The bevy through, divine Apollo's choice,  
His Daphne ! “ We secure Count Richard's voice  
In Este's counsels, good for Este's ends  
As our Taurello,” say his faded friends,  
“ By granting him our Palma ! ” — The sole child,  
They mean, of Agnes Este who beguiled  
Ecelin, years before this Adelaide  
Wedded and turned him wicked : “ but the maid  
Rejects his suit,” those sleepy women boast.  
She, scorning all beside, deserves the most  
Sordello : so, conspicuous in his world  
Of dreams sat Palma. How the tresses curled  
Into a sumptuous swell of gold and wound  
About her like a glory ! even the ground  
Was bright as with spilt sunbeams ; breathe not, breathe  
Not ! — poised, see, one leg doubled underneath  
Its small foot buried in the dimpling snow,  
Rests, but the other, listlessly below,  
O'er the couch-side swings feeling for cool air,  
The vein-streaks swoln a richer violet where  
The languid blood lies heavily ; yet calm

On her slight prop, each flat and outspread palm,  
 As but suspended in the act to rise  
 By consciousness of beauty, whence her eyes  
 Turn with so frank a triumph, for she meets  
 Apollo's gaze in the pine-glooms.

Time fleets :

That's worst ! Because the pre-appointed age  
 Approaches. Fate is tardy with the stage  
 And crowd she promised. Lean he grows and pale,  
 Though restlessly at rest. Hardly avail  
 Fancies to soothè him. Time steals, yet alone  
 He tarries here ! The earnest smile is gone.  
 How long this might continue, matters not ;  
 — For ever, possibly ; since to the spot  
 None come : our lingering Taurello quits  
 Mantua at last, and light our lady flits  
 Back to her place disburdened of a care.  
 Strange — to be constant here if he is there !  
 Is it distrust ? O, never ! for they both  
 Goad Ecelin alike — Romano's growth  
 So daily manifest, that Azzo's dumb  
 And Richard wavers : let but Friedrich come !  
 — Find matter for the minstrelsy's report,  
 Lured from the Isle and its young Kaiser's court  
 To sing us a Messina morning up,  
 And, double rillet of a drinking-cup,  
 Sparkle along to ease the land of drouth,  
 Northward to Provence that, and thus far south  
 The other. What a method to apprise

Neighbors of births, espousals, obsequies !  
Which in their very tongue the Troubadour  
Records ; and his performance makes a tour,  
For Trouveres bear the miracle about,  
Explain its cunning to the vulgar rout,  
Until the Formidable House is famed  
Over the country — as Taurello aimed,  
Who introduced, although the rest adopt,  
The novelty. Such games, her absence stopped,  
Begin afresh now <sup>+</sup>Adelaide, recluse  
No longer, in the light of day pursues  
Her plans at Mantua : whence an accident  
Which, breaking on Sordello's mixed content,  
Opened, like any flash that cures the blind,  
The veritable business of mankind.

## BOOK THE SECOND.

### THIS BUBBLE OF FANCY,

THE woods were long austere with snow : at last  
Pink leaflets budded on the beech, and fast  
Larches, scattered through pine-tree solitudes,  
Brightened, "as in the slumbrous heart o' the woods  
Our buried year, a witch, grew young again  
To placid incantations, and that stain  
About were from her cauldron, green smoke blent  
With those black pines" — so Eglamor gave vent  
To a chance fancy. Whence a just rebuke  
From his companion ; brother Naddo shook  
The solemnest of brows ; " Beware," he said,  
" Of setting up conceits in nature's stead ! "

Forth wandered our Sordello. Naught so sure  
As that to-day's adventure will secure  
Palma, the visioned lady — only pass  
O'er yon damp mound and its exhausted grass,  
Under that brake where sundawn feeds the stalks  
Of withered fern with gold, into those walks  
Of pine, and take her ! Buoyantly he went.  
Again his stooping forehead was besprent  
With dew-drops from the skirting ferns. Then wide  
Opened the great morass, shot every side  
With flashing water through and through ; a-shine,

Thick-steaming, all alive. Whose shape divine  
Quivered i' the farthest rainbow-vapour, glanced  
Athwart the flying herons? He advanced,  
But warily; though Mincio leaped no more,  
Each footfall burst up in the marish-floor  
A diamond jet: and if he stopped to pick  
Rose-lichen, or molest the leeches quick,  
And circling blood-worms, minnow, newt or loach,  
A sudden pond would silently encroach  
This way and that. On Palma passed. The verge  
Of a new wood was gained. She will emerge  
Flushed, now, and panting,— crowds to see,— will own  
She loves him — Boniface to hear, to groan,  
To leave his suit! One screen of pine-trees still  
Opposes; but — the startling spectacle —  
Mantua, this time! Under the walls — a crowd  
Indeed, real men and women, gay and loud  
Round a pavilion. How he stood!

## In truth

No prophecy had come to pass: his youth  
In its prime now — and where was homage poured  
Upon Sordello? — born to be adored,  
And suddenly discovered weak, scarce made  
To cope with any, cast into the shade  
By this and this. Yet something seemed to prick  
And tingle in his blood; a sleight — a trick —  
And much would be explained. It went for naught —  
The best of their endowments were ill bought  
With his identity; nay, the conceit,

That this day's roving led to Palma's feet  
 Was not so vain — list! The word, "Palma!" Steal  
 Aside, and die, Sordello; this is real,  
 And this — abjure!

What next? The curtains, see,  
 Dividing! She is there; and presently  
 He will be there — the proper You, at length —  
 In your own cherished dress of grace and strength:  
 Most like, the very Boniface!

Not so.

It was a showy man advanced; but though  
 A glad cry welcomed him, then every sound  
 Sank and the crowd disposed themselves around,  
 — "This is not he," Sordello felt; while, "Place  
 For the best Troubadour of Boniface!"  
 Hollaed the Jongleurs, — "E glamor, whose lay  
 Concludes his patron's Court of Love to-day!"  
 Obsequious Naddo strung the master's lute  
 With the new lute-string, "Elys," named to suit  
 The song: he stealthily at watch, the while,  
 Biting his lip to keep down a great smile  
 Of pride: then up he struck. Sordello's brain  
 Swam; for he knew a sometime deed again;  
 So, could supply each foolish gap and chasm  
 The minstrel left in his enthusiasm,  
 Mistaking its true version — was the tale  
 Not of Apollo? Only, what avail  
 Luring her down, that Elys an he pleased,  
 If the man dared no further? Has he ceased?

And, lo, the people's frank applause half done,  
Sordello was beside him, had begun  
(Spite of indignant twitchings from his friend  
The Trouvere) the true lay with the true end,  
Taking the other's names and time and place  
For his. On flew the song, a giddy race,  
After the flying story; word made leap  
Out word, rhyme — rhyme; the lay could barely keep  
Pace with the action visibly rushing past:  
Both ended. Back fell Naddo more aghast  
Than some Egyptian from the harassed bull  
That wheeled abrupt and, bellowing, fronted full  
His plague, who spied a scarab 'neath his tongue,  
And found 't was Apis' flank his hasty prong  
Insulted. But the people — but the cries,  
The crowding round, and proffering the prize!  
(For he had gained some prize) — He seemed to shrink  
Into a sleepy cloud, just at whose brink  
One sight withheld him. There sat Adelaide,  
Silent; but at her knees the very maid  
Of the North Chamber, her red lips as rich,  
The same pure fleecy hair; one weft of which,  
Golden and great, quite touched his cheek as o'er  
She leant, speaking some six words and no more.  
He answered something, anything; and she  
Unbound a scarf and laid it heavily  
Upon him, her neck's warmth and all. Again  
Moved the arrested magic; in his brain  
Noises grew, and a light that turned to glare,

And greater glare, until the intense flare  
Engulfed him, shut the whole scene from his sense.  
And when he woke 't was many a furlong thence,  
At home ; the sun shining his ruddy wont ;  
The customary birds'-chirp ; but his front  
Was crowned — was crowned ! Her scented scarf around  
His neck ! Whose gorgeous vesture heaps the ground ?  
A prize ? He turned, and peeringly on him  
Brooded the women-faces, kind and dim,  
Ready to talk. — “ The Jongleurs in a troop  
Had brought him back, Naddo and Squarcialupe  
And Tagliafer ; how strange ! a childhood spent  
In taking, well for him, so brave a bent !  
Since Eglamor,” they heard, “ was dead with spite,  
And Palma chose him for her minstrel.”

## Light

Sordello rose — to think, now ; hitherto  
He had perceived. Sure, a discovery grew  
Out of it all ! Best live from first to last  
The transport o'er again. A week he passed,  
Sucking the sweet out of each circumstance,  
From the bard's outbreak to the luscious trance  
Bounding his own achievement. Strange ! A man  
Recounted an adventure, but began  
Imperfectly ; his own task was to fill  
The framework up, sing well what he sang ill,  
Supply the necessary points, set loose  
As many incidents of little use  
— More imbecile the other, not to see

Their relative importance clear as he !  
But, for a special pleasure in the act  
Of singing — had he ever turned, in fact,  
From Elys, to sing Elys ? — from each fit  
Of rapture, to contrive a song of it ?  
True, this snatch or the other seemed to wind  
Into a treasure, helped himself to find  
A beauty in himself ; for, see, he soared  
By means of that mere snatch to many a hoard  
Of fancies ; as some falling cone bears soft  
The eye, along the fir-tree-spire, aloft  
To a dove's nest. Then, how divine the cause  
Such a performance might exact applause  
From men, if they had fancies too ? Could fate  
Decree they found a beauty separate  
In the poor snatch itself ? — “ Take Elys, there,  
— ‘ Her head that 's sharp and perfect like a pear,  
So close and smooth are laid the few fine locks  
Colored like honey oozed from topmost rocks  
Sun-blanced the livelong summer ’ — if they heard  
Just those two rhymes, assented at my word,  
And loved them as I love them who have run  
These fingers through those pale locks, let the sun  
Into the white cool skin — who first could clutch,  
Then praise — I needs must be a God to such.  
Or if some few, above themselves, and yet  
Beneath me, like their Eglamor, have set  
An impress on our gift ? So, men believe  
And worship what they know not, nor receive

Delight from. Have they fancies — slow, perchance,  
Not at their beck, which indistinctly glance  
Until, by song, each floating part be linked  
To each, and all grow palpable, distinct ?”  
He pondered this.

Meanwhile, sounds low and drear  
Stole on him, and a noise of footsteps, near  
And nearer, and the underwood was pushed  
Aside, the larches grazed, the dead leaves crushed  
At the approach of men. The wind seemed laid ;  
Only, the trees shrunk slightly and a shade  
Came o'er the sky although 't was midday yet :  
You saw each half-shut downcast floweret  
Flutter — “a Roman bride, when they'd dispart  
Her unbound tresses with the Sabine dart,  
Holding that famous rape in memory still,  
Felt creep into her curls the iron chill,  
And looked thus,” Eglamor would say — indeed  
'T is Eglamor, no other, these precede  
Home hither in the woods. “ 'T were surely sweet  
Far from the scene of one's forlorn defeat  
To sleep !” judged Naddo, who in person led  
Jongleurs and Trouveres, chanting at their head,  
A scanty company ; for, sooth to say,  
Our beaten Troubadour had seen his day.  
Old worshippers were something shamed, old friends  
Nigh weary ; still the death proposed amends.  
“ Let us but get them safely through my song  
And home again !” quoth Naddo.

All along,

This man (they rest the bier upon the sand)

— This calm corpse with the loose flowers in his hand,  
Eglamor, lived Sordello's opposite.

For him indeed was Naddo's notion right,

And verse a temple-worship vague and vast,

A ceremony that withdrew the last

Opposing bolt, looped back the lingering veil

Which hid the holy place — should one so frail

Stand there without such effort? or repine

That much was blank, uncertain at the shrine

He knelt before, till, soothed by many a rite,

The Power responded, and some sound or sight

Grew up, his own forever, to be fixed

In rhyme, the beautiful, forever! mixed

With his own life, unloosed when he should please,

Having it safe at hand, ready to ease

All pain, remove all trouble; every time

He loosed that fancy from its bonds of rhyme,

Like Perseus when he loosed his naked love,

Faltering; so distinct and far above

Himself, these fancies! He, no genius rare,

Transfiguring in fire or wave or air

At will, but a poor gnome that, cloistered up

In some rock-chamber with his agate cup,

His topaz rod, his seed-pearl, in these few

And their arrangement finds enough to do

For his best art. Then, how he loved that art!

The calling marking him a man apart

From men — one not to care, take counsel for  
Cold hearts, comfortless faces — (Eglamor  
Was neediest of his tribe) — since verse, the gift,  
Was his, and men, the whole of them, must shift  
Without it, e'en content themselves with wealth  
And pomp and power, snatching a life by stealth.  
So, Eglamor was not without his pride !

The sorriest bat which cowers through noontide  
While other birds are jocund, has one time  
When moon and stars are blinded, and the prime  
Of earth is his to claim, nor find a peer ;  
And Eglamor was noblest poet here  
He knew that, 'mid the April woods, he cast  
Conceits upon in plenty as he past,  
That Naddo might suppose him not to think  
Entirely on the coming triumph : wink  
At the one weakness ! 'T was a fervid child,  
That song of his — no brother of the guild  
Had e'er conceived its like. The rest you know,  
The exaltation and the overthrow :  
Our poet lost his purpose, lost his rank,  
His life — to that it came. Yet envy sank  
Within him, as he heard Sordello out,  
And, for the first time, shouted — tried to shout  
Like others, not from any zeal to show  
Pleasure that way : the common sort did so,  
And what was Eglamor ? who, bending down  
The same, placed his beneath Sordello's crown,  
Printed a kiss on his successor's hand,

Left one great tear on it, then joined his band  
— In time ; for some were watching at the door  
Who knows what envy may effect? “ Give o'er,  
Nor charm his lips, nor craze him ! ” (here one spied  
And disengaged the withered crown) — “ Beside  
His crown ! How prompt and clear those verses rung  
To answer yours ! nay, sing them ! ” And he sung  
Them calmly. Home he went ; friends used to wait  
His coming, zealous to congratulate,  
But, to a man, so quickly runs report,  
Could do no less than leave him, and escort  
His rival. That eve, then, bred many a thought :  
What must his future life be ? was he brought  
So low, who was so lofty this Spring morn ?  
At length he said, “ Best sleep now with my scorn,  
And by to-morrow I devise some plain  
Expedient ! ” So, he slept, nor woke again.  
They found as much, those friends, when they returned  
O'erflowing with the marvels they had learned  
About Sordello's paradise, his roves  
Among the hills and valleys, plains and groves,  
Wherein, no doubt, this lay was roughly cast,  
Polished by slow degrees, completed last  
To Eglamor's discomfiture and death.

Such form the chanters now, and, out of breath,  
They lay the beaten man in his abode,  
Naddo reciting that same luckless ode,  
Doleful to hear. Sordello could explore  
By means of it, however, one step more

In joy ; and, mastering the round at length,  
Learnt how to live in weakness as in strength,  
When from his covert forth he stood, addressed  
Eglamor, bade the tender ferns invest,  
Primæval pines o'er canopy his couch,  
And, most of all, his fame — (shall I avouch  
Eglamor heard it, dead though he might look,  
And laughed as from his brow Sordello took  
The crown, and laid it on his breast, and said  
It was a crown, now, fit for poet's head ?)

— Continue. Nor the prayer quite fruitless fell.  
A plant they have yielding a three-leaved bell  
Which whitens at the heart ere noon, and ails  
Till evening ; evening gives it to her gales  
To clear away with such forgotten things  
As are an eyesore to the morn : this brings  
Him to their mind, and bears his very name.

So much for Eglamor. My own month came ;  
'T was a sunrise of blossoming and May.  
Beneath a flowering laurel thicket lay  
Sordello ; each new sprinkle of white stars  
That smell fainter of wine than Massic jars  
Dug up at Baiæ, when the south wind shed  
The ripest, made him happier ; filleted  
And robed the same, only a lute beside  
Lay on the turf. Before him far and wide  
The country stretched : Goito slept behind  
— The castle and its covert, which confined  
Him with his hopes and fears ; so fain of old

To leave the story of his birth untold.  
At intervals, 'spite the fantastic glow  
Of his Apollo-life, a certain low  
And wretched whisper, winding through the bliss,  
Admonished, no such fortune could be his,  
All was quite false and sure to fade one day :  
The closelier drew he round him his array  
Of brilliance to expel the truth. But when  
A reason for his difference from men  
Surprised him at the grave, he took no rest  
While aught of that old life, superbly drest  
Down to its meanest incident, remained  
A mystery — alas, they soon explained  
Away Apollo ! and the tale amounts  
To this : when at Vicenza both her Counts  
Banished the Vivaresi kith and kin,  
Those Maltraversi hung on Ecelin,  
Reviled him as he followed ; he for spite  
Must fire their quarter, though that self-same night  
Among the flames young Ecelin was born  
Of Adelaide, there too, and barely torn  
From the roused populace hard on the rear,  
By a poor archer when his chieftain's fear  
Grew high ; into the thick Elcorte leapt,  
Saved her, and died ; no creature left except  
His child to thank. And when the full escape  
Was known — how men impaled from chine to nape  
Unlucky Prata, all to pieces spurned  
Bishop Pistore's concubines, and burned

Taurello's entire household, flesh and fell,  
Missing the sweeter prey — such courage well  
Might claim reward. The orphan, ever since,  
Sordello, had been nurtured by his prince  
Within a blind retreat where Adelaide —  
(For, once this notable discovery made,  
The Past at every point was understood)  
— Might harbor easily when times were rude,  
When Azzo schemed for Palma, to retrieve  
That pledge of Agnes Este — loath to leave  
Mantua unguarded with a vigilant eye,  
Taurello biding there ambiguously —  
He who could have no motive now to moil  
For his own fortunes since their utter spoil —  
As it were worth while yet (went the report)  
To disengage himself from her. In short,  
Apollo vanished; a mean youth, just named  
His lady's minstrel, was to be proclaimed  
— How shall I phrase it? — Monarch of the World!  
For, on the morning that array was furled  
Forever, and in place of one a slave  
To longings, wild indeed, but longings save  
In dreams as wild, suppressed — one daring not  
Assume the mastery such dreams allot,  
Until a magical equipment, strength  
Grace, wisdom, decked him too, — he chose at length,  
Content with unproved wits and failing frame,  
In virtue of his simple will, to claim  
That mastery, no less — to do his best

With means so limited, and let the rest  
Go by,—the seal was set: never again  
Sordello could in his own sight remain  
One of the many, one with hopes and cares  
And interests nowise distinct from theirs,  
Only peculiar in a thriveless store  
Of fancies, which were fancies and no more;  
Never again for him and for the crowd  
A common law was challenged and allowed  
If calmly reasoned of, howe'er denied  
By a mad impulse nothing justified  
Short of Apollo's presence. The divorce  
Is clear: why needs Sordello square his course  
By any known example? Men no more  
Compete with him than tree and flower before;  
Himself, inactive, yet is greater far  
Than such as act, each stooping to his star,  
Acquiring thence his function; he has gained  
The same result with meaner mortals trained  
To strength or beauty, moulded to express  
Each the idea that rules him; since no less  
He comprehends that function, but can still  
Embrace the others, take of might his fill  
With Richard as of grace with Palma, mix  
Their qualities, or for a moment fix  
On one; abiding free meantime, uncramped  
By any partial organ, never stamped  
Strong, and to strength turning all energies—  
Wise, and restricted to becoming wise—

That is, he loves not, nor possesses One  
 Idea that, star-like over, lures him on  
 To its exclusive purpose. "Fortunate!  
 This flesh of mine ne'er strove to emulate  
 A soul so various — took no casual mould  
 Of the first fancy and, contracted, cold,  
 Lay clogged forever thence, averse to change  
 As that: whereas it left her free to range,  
 Remains itself a blank, cast into shade,  
 Encumbers little, if it cannot aid.

So, range, my soul! — who, by self-consciousness,  
 The last drop of all beauty dost express —  
 The grace of seeing grace, a quintessence  
 For thee: but for the world, that can dispense  
 Wonder on men who, themselves, wonder — make  
 A shift to love at second-hand, and take  
 Those for its idols who but idolize,  
 Themselves, — world that loves souls as strong or wise,  
 Who, themselves, love strength, wisdom, — it shall bow  
 Surely in unexampled worship now,  
 Discerning me!" —

(Dear monarch, I beseech,

Notice how lamentably wide a breach  
 Is here! discovering this, discover too  
 What our poor world has possibly to do  
 With it! As pygmy natures as you please —  
 So much the better for you; take your ease;  
 Look on, and laugh; style yourself God alone;  
 Strangle some day with a cross olive-stone:

All that is right enough: but why want us  
To know that you yourself know thus and thus?)  
“ The world shall bow to me conceiving all  
Man’s life, who sees its blisses, great and small,  
Afar — not tasting any ; no machine  
To exercise my utmost will is mine :  
Be mine mere consciousness ! Let them perceive  
What I could do, a mastery believe,  
Asserted and established to the throng  
By their selected evidence of song  
Which now shall prove, whate’er they are, or seek  
To be, I am — who take no pains to speak,  
Change no old standards of perfection, vex  
With no strange forms created to perplex,  
But will perform their bidding and no more,  
At their own satiating-point give o’er,  
While each shall love in me the love that leads  
His soul to its perfection.” Song, not deeds,  
(For we get tired) was chosen. Fate would brook  
Mankind no other organ ; he would look  
For not another channel to dispense  
His own volition, and receive their sense  
Of its existing ; but would be content,  
Obstructed else, with merely verse for vent.  
Nor should, for instance, strength an outlet seek  
And, striving, be admired, nor grace bespeak  
Wonder, displayed in gracious attitudes ;  
Nor wisdom, poured forth, change unseemly moods :  
But he would give and take on song’s one point.

Like some huge throbbing-stone that, poised a-joint,  
Sounds, to affect on its basaltic bed,  
Must sue in just one accent; tempests shed  
Thunder, and raves the landstorm: only let  
That key by any little noise be set —  
The far benighted hunter's halloo pitch  
On that, the hungry curlew chance to scritch  
Or serpent hiss it, rustling through the rift,  
However loud, however low — all lift  
The groaning monster, stricken to the heart.

Lo ye, the world's concernment, for its part,  
And this, for his, will hardly interfere!  
Its businesses in blood and blaze this year  
But wile the hour away — a pastime slight  
Till he shall step upon the platform: right!  
And, now thus much is settled, cast in rough,  
Proved feasible, be counselled! thought enough, —  
Slumber, Sordello! any day will serve:  
Were it a less digested plan! how swerve  
To-morrow? Meanwhile eat these sun-dried grapes,  
And watch the soaring hawk there! Life escapes  
Merrily thus.

He thoroughly read o'er  
His truchman Naddo's missive six times more,  
Praying him visit Mantua and supply  
A famished world.

The evening star was high  
When he reached Mantua, but his fame arrived  
Before him: friends applauded, foes connived,

And Naddo looked an angel, and the rest  
Angels, and all these angels would be blest  
Supremely by a song — the thrice-renowned  
Goito manufacture. Then he found  
(Casting about to satisfy the crowd)  
That happy vehicle, so late allowed,  
A sore annoyance : 't was the song's effect  
He cared for, scarce the song itself: reflect !  
In the past life, what might be singing's use ?  
Just to delight his Delians, whose profuse  
Praise, not the toilsome process which procured  
That praise, enticed Apollo : dreams abjured,  
No over-leaping means for ends — take both  
For granted or take neither ! I am loath  
To say the rhymes at last were Eglamor's ;  
But Naddo, chuckling, bade competitors  
Go pine ; "the master certes meant to waste  
No effort, cautiously had probed the taste  
He 'd please anon : true bard, in short, disturb  
His title if they could ; nor spur nor curb,  
Fancy nor reason, wanting in him ; whence  
The staple of his verses, common sense :  
He built on man's broad nature — gift of gifts,  
That power to build ! The world contented shifts  
With counterfeits enough, a dreary sort  
Of warriors, statesmen, ere it can extort  
Its poet-soul — that 's, after all, a freak  
(The having eyes to see and tongue to speak)  
With our herd's stupid sterling happiness

So plainly incompatible that — yes —  
Yes — should a son of his improve the breed  
And turn out poet, he were cursed indeed ! ”  
“ Well, there ’s Goito and its woods anon,  
If the worst happen ; best go stoutly on  
Now ! ” thought Sordello.

Ay, and goes on yet !

You pother with your glossaries to get  
A notion of the Troubadour’s intent  
In rondel, tenzon, virlai or sirvent —  
Much as you study arras how to twirl  
His angelot, plaything of page and girl,  
Once ; but you surely reach, at last, — or, no !  
Never quite reach what struck the people so,  
As from the welter of their time he drew  
Its elements successively to view,  
Followed all actions backward on their course,  
And catching up, unmixed at the source,  
Such a strength, such a weakness, added then  
A touch or two, and turned them into men.  
Virtue took form, nor vice refused a shape ;  
Here heaven opened, there was hell agape,  
As Saint this simpered past in sanctity,  
Sinner the other flared portentous by  
A greedy people. Then why stop, surprised  
At his success ? The scheme was realized  
Too suddenly in one respect : a crowd  
Praising, eyes quick to see, and lips as loud  
To speak, delicious homage to receive,

The woman's breath to feel upon his sleeve,  
Who said, "But Anafest — why asks he less  
Than Lucio, in your verses? how confess,  
It seemed too much but yestereve!" — the youth,  
Who bade him earnestly, "Avow the truth!  
You love Bianca, surely, from your song;  
I knew I was unworthy!" — soft or strong,  
In poured such tributes ere he had arranged  
Ethereal ways to take them, sorted, changed,  
Digested. Courted thus at unawares,  
In spite of his pretensions and his cares,  
He caught himself shamefully hankering  
After the obvious petty joys that spring  
From real life, fain relinquish pedestal  
And condescend with pleasures — one and all  
To be renounced, no doubt; for, thus to chain  
Himself to single joys and so refrain  
From tasting their quintessence, frustrated, sure,  
His prime design; each joy must he abjure  
Even for love of it.

He laughed : what sage  
But perishes if from his magic page  
He looked because, at the first line, a proof  
'T was heard salutes him from the cavern-roof?  
"On! Give yourself, excluding aught beside,  
To the day's task; compel your slave provide  
Its utmost at the soonest; turn the leaf  
Thoroughly conned. These lays of yours, in brief —  
Cannot men bear, now, something better? — fly

A pitch beyond this unreal pageantry  
Of essences? the period sure has ceased  
For such : present us with ourselves, at least,  
Not portions of ourselves, mere loves and hates  
Made flesh : wait not ! ”

Awhile the poet waits

However. The first trial was enough :  
He left imagining, to try the stuff  
That held the imaged thing, and, let it writhe  
Never so fiercely, scarce allowed a tithe  
To reach the light — his Language. How he sought  
The cause, conceived a cure, and slow re-wrought  
That Language, — welding words into the crude  
Mass from the new speech round him, till a rude  
Armor was hammered out, in time to be  
Approved beyond the Roman panoply  
Melted to make it, — boots not. This obtained  
With some ado, no obstacle remained  
To using it ; accordingly he took  
An action with its actors, quite forsook  
Himself to live in each, returned anon  
With the result — a creature, and, by one  
And one, proceeded leisurely to equip  
Its limbs in harness of his workmanship.  
“ Accomplished ! Listen, Mantuans ! ” Fond essay !  
Piece after piece that armor broke away,  
Because perceptions whole, like that he sought  
To clothe, reject so pure a work of thought  
As language : thought may take perception’s place

But hardly coexist in any case,  
 Being its mere presentment — of the whole  
 By parts, the simultaneous and the sole  
 By the successive and the many. Lacks  
 The crowd perception ? painfully it tacks  
 Thought to thought, which Sordello, needing such,  
 Has rent perception into : it 's to clutch  
 And reconstruct — his office to diffuse,  
 Destroy : as hard, then, to obtain a Muse  
 As to become Apollo. “ For the rest,  
 E'en if some wondrous vehicle exprest  
 The whole dream, what impertinence in me  
 So to express it, who myself can be  
 The dream ! nor, on the other hand, are those  
 I sing to, over-likely to suppose  
 A higher than the highest I present  
 Now, which they praise already : be content  
 Both parties, rather — they with the old verse,  
 And I with the old praise — far go, fare worse ! ”  
 A few adhering rivets loosed, upsprings  
 The angel, sparkles off his mail, and rings  
 Whirled from each delicatest limb it warps,  
 As might Apollo from the sudden corpse  
 Of Hyacinth have cast his luckless quoits.  
 He set to celebrating the exploits  
 Of Montfort o'er the Mountaineers.

Then came  
 The world's revenge : their pleasure, now his aim  
 Merely, — what was it ? “ Not to play the fool

So much as learn our lesson in your school!"  
Replied the world. He found that, every time  
He gained applause by any ballad-rhyme,  
His auditory recognized no jot  
As he intended, and, mistaking not  
Him for his meanest hero, ne'er was dunce  
Sufficient to believe him — all, at once.  
His will . . . conceive it caring for his will!  
— Mantuans, the main of them, admiring still  
How a mere singer, ugly, stunted, weak,  
Had Montfort at completely (so to speak)  
His fingers' ends; while past the praise-tide swept  
To Montfort, either's share distinctly kept:  
The true meed for true merit! — his abates  
Into a sort he most repudiates,  
And on them angrily he turns. Who were  
The Mantuans, after all, that he should care  
About their recognition, ay or no?  
In spite of the convention months ago,  
(Why blink the truth?) was not he forced to help  
This same ungrateful audience, every whelp  
Of Naddo's litter, make them pass for peers  
With the bright band of old Goito years,  
As erst he toiled for flower or tree? Why, there  
Sat Palma! Adelaide's funereal hair  
Ennobled the next corner. Ay, he strewed  
A fairy dust upon that multitude,  
Although he feigned to take them by themselves;  
His giants dignified those puny elves,

Sublimed their faint applause. In short, he found  
Himself still footing a delusive round,  
Remote as ever from the self-display  
He meant to compass, hampered every way  
By what he hoped assistance. Wherefore then  
Continue, make believe to find in men  
A use he found not?

Weeks, months, years went by;

And, lo, Sordello vanished utterly,  
Sundered in twain; each spectral part at strife  
With each; one jarred against another life;  
The Poet thwarting hopelessly the Man  
Who, fooled no longer, free in fancy ran  
Here, there; let slip no opportunities  
As pitiful, forsooth, beside the prize  
To drop on him some no-time and acquit  
His constant faith (the Poet-half's to wit)—  
That waiving any compromise between  
No joy and all joy kept the hunger keen  
Beyond most methods)—of incurring scoff  
From the Man-portion not to be put off  
With self-reflectings by the Poet's scheme,  
Though ne'er so bright; that sauntered forth in dream,  
Drest any how, nor waited mystic frames,  
Immeasurable gifts, astounding claims,  
But just his sorry self—who yet might be  
Sorrier for aught he in reality  
Achieved, so pinioned That the Poet-part,  
Fondling, in turn of fancy, verse; the Art

Developing his soul a thousand ways —  
Potent, by its assistance, to amaze  
The multitude with majesties, convince  
Each sort of nature, that same nature's prince  
Accosted it. Language, the makeshift, grew  
Into a bravest of expedients, too ;  
Apollo, seemed it now, perverse had thrown  
Quiver and bow away, the lyre alone  
Sufficed. While, out of dream, his day's work went  
To tune a crazy tenzon or sirvent —  
So hampered him the Man-part, thrust to judge  
Between the bard and the bard's audience, grudge  
A minute's toil that missed its due reward !  
But the complete Sordello, Man and Bard,  
John's cloud-girt angel, this foot on the land,  
That on the sea, with open in his hand  
A bitter-sweetling of a book — was gone.

And if internal struggles to be one  
That frittered him incessantly piecemeal,  
Referred, ne'er so obliquely, to the real  
Mantuans ! intruding ever with some call  
To action while he pondered, once for all,  
Which looked the easier effort — to pursue  
This course, still leap o'er paltry joys, yearn through  
The present ill-appreciated stage  
Of self-revealment, and compel the age  
Know him ; or else, forswearing bard-craft, wake  
From out his lethargy and nobly shake  
Off timid habits of denial, mix

With men, enjoy like men. Ere he could fix  
On aught, in rushed the Mantuans ; much they cared  
For his perplexity ! Thus unprepared,  
The obvious if not only shelter lay  
In deeds, the dull conventions of his day  
Prescribed the like of him : why not be glad  
'T is settled Palma's minstrel, good or bad,  
Submits to this and that established rule ?  
Let Vidal change, or any other fool,  
His murrey-colored robe for philamot,  
And crop his hair ; too skin-deep, is it not,  
Such vigor ? Then, a sorrow to the heart,  
His talk ! Whatever topics they might start,  
Had to be groped for in his consciousness  
Straight, and as straight delivered them by guess.  
Only obliged to ask himself, " What was,"  
A speedy answer followed ; but, alas,  
One of God's large ones, tardy to condense  
Itself into a period ; answers whence  
A tangle of conclusions must be stripped  
At any risk ere, trim to pattern clipped,  
They matched rare specimens the Mantuan flock  
Regaled him with, each talker from his stock  
Of sorted-o'er opinions, every stage,  
Juicy in youth or desiccate with age,  
Fruits like the fig-tree's, rathe-ripe, rotten-rich,  
Sweet-sour, all tastes to take : a practice which  
He too had not impossibly attained,  
Once either of those fancy-flights restrained ;

For, at conjecture how might words appear  
To others, playing there what happened here,  
And occupied abroad by what he spurned  
At home, 't was slipt, the occasion he returned  
To seize : he 'd strike that lyre adroitly — speech,  
Would but a twenty-cubit plectre reach ;  
A clever hand, consummate instrument,  
Were both brought close ; each excellency went  
For nothing else. The question Naddo asked,  
Had just a lifetime moderately tasked  
To answer, Naddo's fashion. More disgust  
And more ! why move his soul, since move it must  
At a minute's notice or as good it failed  
To move at all ? The end was, he retailed  
Some ready-made opinion, put to use  
This quip, that maxim, ventured reproduce  
Gestures and tones — at any folly caught  
Serving to finish with, nor too much sought  
If false or true 't was spoken ; praise and blame  
Of what he said grew pretty well the same  
— Meantime awards to meantime acts : his soul,  
Unequal to the compassing a whole,  
Saw, in a tenth part, less and less to strive  
About. And as for men in turn . . . contrive  
Who could to take eternal interest  
In them, so hate the worst, so love the best !  
Though, in pursuance of his passive plan,  
He hailed, decried the proper way.

As Man

So figured he ; and how as Poet ? Verse  
 Came only not to a stand-still. The worse,  
 That his poor piece of daily work to do  
 Was, not sink under any rivals ; who  
 Loudly and loud enough, without these qualms,  
 Tuned, from Bocafoli's stark-naked psalms,  
 To Plara's sonnets spoilt by toying with,  
 " As knops that stud some almug to the pith  
 Prickèd for gum, wry thence, and crinklèd worse  
 Than pursèd eyelids of a river-horse  
 Sunning himself o' the slime when whirrs the  
 breeze " —

*Gad-fly*, that is. He might compete with these !  
 But — but —

“ Observe a pompion-twine afloat ;  
 Pluck me one cup from off the castle-moat !  
 Along with cup you raise leaf, stalk and root,  
 The entire surface of the pool to boot.  
 So could I pluck a cup, put in one song  
 A single sight, did not my hand, too strong,  
 Twitch in the least the root-strings of the whole.  
 How should externals satisfy my soul ? ”

“ Why that 's precise the error Squarcialupe ”  
 (Hazarded Naddo) “ finds ; ' the man can 't stoop  
 To sing us out, ' quoth he, ' a mere romance ;  
 He 'd fain do better than the best, enhance  
 The subjects ' rarity, work problems out  
 Therewith ' : now, you 're a bard, a bard past doubt,  
 And no philosopher ; why introduce

Crotchets like these? fine, surely, but no use  
In poetry — which still must be, to strike,  
Based upon common sense; there's nothing like  
Appealing to our nature! what beside  
Was your first poetry? No tricks were tried  
In that, no hollow thrills, affected throes!  
'The man,' said we, 'tells his own joys and woes —  
We'll trust him.' Would you have your songs endure?  
Build on the human heart! — Why, to be sure  
Yours is one sort of heart — but I mean theirs,  
Ours, every one's, the healthy heart one cares  
To build on! Central peace, mother of strength,  
That's father of . . . nay, go yourself that length,  
Ask those calm-hearted doers what they do  
When they have got their calm! And is it true,  
Fire rankles at the heart of every globe?  
Perhaps! But these are matters one may probe  
Too deeply for poetic purposes:  
Rather select a theory that . . . yes,  
Laugh! what does that prove? — stations you midway  
And saves some little o'er-refining. Nay,  
That's rank injustice done me! I restrict  
The poet? Don't I hold the poet picked  
Out of a host of warriors, statesman . . . did  
I tell you? Very like! As well you hid  
That sense of power, you have! True bards believe  
All able to achieve what they achieve —  
That is, just nothing — in one point abide  
Profounder simpletons than all beside.

Oh, ay ! The knowledge that you are a bard  
Must constitute your prime, nay sole, reward !”  
So prattled Naddo, busiest of the tribe  
Of genius-haunters — how shall I describe  
What grubs or nips, or rubs, or rips — your louse  
For love, your flea for hate, magnanimous,  
Malignant, Pappacoda, Tagliafer,  
Picking a sustenance from wear and tear  
By implements it sedulous employs  
To undertake, lay down, mete out, o'er-toise  
Sordello ? Fifty creepers to elude  
At once ! They settled stanchly ; shame ensued :  
Behold the monarch of mankind succumb  
To the last fool who turned him round his thumb,  
As Naddo styled it ! ’T was not worth oppose  
The matter of a moment, gainsay those  
He aimed at getting rid of ; better think  
Their thoughts and speak their speech, secure to slink  
Back expeditiously to his safe place,  
And chew the cud — what he and what his race  
Were really, each of them. Yet even this  
Conformity was partial. He would miss  
Some point, brought into contact with them ere  
Assured in what small segment of the sphere  
Of his existence they attended him ;  
Whence blunders — falsehoods rectify — a grim  
List — slur it over ! How ? If dreams were tried,  
His will swayed sicklily from side to side,  
Nor merely neutralized his waking act

But tended e'en in fancy to distract  
The intermediate will, the choice of means.  
He lost the art of dreaming: Mantuan scenes  
Supplied a baron, say, he sung before,  
Handsomely reckless, full to running o'er  
Of gallantries; "abjure the soul, content  
With body, therefore!" Scarcely had he bent  
Himself in dream thus low, when matter fast  
Cried out, he found, for spirit to contrast  
And task it duly; by advances slight,  
The simple stuff becoming composite,  
Count Lori grew Apollo — best recall  
His fancy! Then would some rough peasant-Paul,  
Like those old Ecelin confers with, glance  
His gay apparel o'er; that countenance  
Gathered his shattered fancy into one,  
And, body clean abolished, soul alone  
Sufficed the gray Paulician: by and by,  
To balance the ethereality,  
Passions were needed; foiled he sunk again.

Meanwhile the world rejoiced ('t is time explain)  
Because a sudden sickness set it free  
From Adelaide. Missing the mother-bee,  
Her mountain-hive Romano swarmed; at once  
A rustle-forth of daughters and of sons  
Blackened the valley. "I am sick too, old,  
Half crazed I think; what good's the Kaiser's gold  
To such an one? God help me! for I catch  
My children's greedy sparkling eyes at watch —

He bears that double breastplate on, they say,  
So many minutes less than yesterday !  
Beside, Monk Hilary is on his knees  
Now, sworn to kneel and pray till God shall please  
Exact a punishment for many things  
You know, and some you never knew ; which brings  
To memory, Azzo's sister Beatrix  
And Richard's Giglia are my Alberic's  
And Ecelin's betrothed ; the Count himself  
Must get my Palma : Ghibellin and Guelf  
Mean to embrace each other." So began  
Romano's missive to his fighting-man  
Taurello — on the Tuscan's death, away  
With Friedrich sworn to sail from Naples' bay  
Next month for Syria. Never thunder-clap  
Out of Vesuvius' throat, like this mishap  
Startled him. "That accursed Vicenza ! I  
Absent, and she selects this time to die !  
Ho, fellows, for Vicenza !" Half a score  
Of horses ridden dead, he stood before  
Romano in his reeking spurs : too late —  
"Boniface urged me, Este could not wait,"  
The chieftain stammered ; "let me die in peace —  
Forget me ! Was it I e'er craved increase  
Of rule ? Do you and Friedrich plot your worst  
Against the Father : as you found me first  
So leave me now. Forgive me ! Palma, sure,  
Is at Goito still. Retain that lure —  
Only be pacified !"

## The country rung

With such a piece of news: on every tongue,  
How Ecelin's great servant, congeed off,  
Had done a long day's service, so, might doff  
The green and yellow, and recover breath  
At Mantua, whither, — since Retrude's death,  
(The girlish slip of a Sicilian bride  
From Otho's House, he carried to reside  
At Mantua till the Ferrarese should pile  
A structure worthy her imperial style,  
The gardens raise, the statues there enshrine,  
She never lived to see) — although his line  
Was ancient in her archives and she took  
A pride in him, that city, nor forsook  
Her child when he forsook himself and spent  
A prowess on Romano surely meant  
For his own growth — whither he ne'er resorts  
If wholly satisfied (to trust reports)  
With Ecelin. So, forward in a trice  
Were shows to greet him. "Take a friend's advice,"  
Quoth Naddo to Sordello, "nor be rash  
Because your rivals (nothing can abash  
Some folks) demur that we pronounced you best  
To sound the great man's welcome; 't is a test,  
Remember! Strojavacca looks asquint,  
The rough fat sloven; and there's plenty hint  
Your pinions have received of late a shock —  
Out-soar them, cobswan of the silver flock!  
Sing well!" A signal wonder, song's no whit  
Facilitated.

Fast the minutes flit;  
Another day, Sordello finds, will bring  
The soldier, and he cannot choose but sing;  
So, a last shift, quits Mantua — slow, alone :  
Out of that aching brain, a very stone,  
Song must be struck. What occupies that front ?  
Just how he was more awkward than his wont  
The night before, when Naldo, who had seen  
Taurello on his progress, praised the mien  
For dignity no crosses could affect —  
Such was a joy, and might not he detect  
A satisfaction if established joys  
Were proved imposture ? Poetry annoys  
Its utmost: wherefore fret ? Verses may come  
Or keep away ! And thus he wandered, dumb  
Till evening, when he paused, thoroughly spent,  
On a blind hill-top : down the gorge he went,  
Yielding himself up as to an embrace.  
The moon came out ; like features of a face  
A querulous fraternity of pines,  
Sad blackthorn clumps, leafless and grovelling vines  
Also came out, made gradually up  
The picture ; 't was Goito's mountain-cup  
And castle. He had dropped through one defile  
He never dared explore, the Chief erewhile  
Had vanished by. Back rushed the dream, enwrapped  
Him wholly. 'T was Apollo now they lapped,  
Those mountains, not a pettish minstrel meant  
To wear his soul away in discontent,

Brooding on fortune's malice. Heart and brain  
Swelled; he expanded to himself again,  
As some thin seedling spice-tree starved and frail,  
Pushing between cat's head and ibis' tail  
Crusted into the porphyry pavement smooth,  
— Suffered remain just as it sprung, to soothe  
The Soldan's pining daughter, never yet  
Well in her chilly green-glazed minaret,—  
When rooted up, the sunny day she died,  
And flung into the common court beside  
Its parent tree. Come home, Sordello! Soon  
Was he low muttering, beneath the moon,  
Of sorrow saved, of quiet evermore,—  
Since from the purpose, he maintained before,  
Only resulted wailing and hot tears.  
Ah, the slim castle! dwindled of late years,  
But more mysterious; gone to ruin — trails  
Of vine through every loop-hole. Naught avails  
The night as, torch in hand, he must explore  
The maple chamber — did I say, its floor  
Was made of intersecting cedar beams?  
Worn now with gaps so large, there blew cold streams  
Of air quite from the dungeon; lay your ear  
Close and 't is like, one after one, you hear  
In the blind darkness water drop. The nests  
And nooks retained their long ranged vesture-chests  
Empty and smelling of the iris-root  
The Tuscan grated o'er them to recruit  
Her wasted wits. Palma was gone that day,

Said the remaining women. Last, he lay  
Beside the Carian group reserved and still.

The Body, the Machine for Acting Will,  
Had been at the commencement proved unfit ;  
That for Reflecting, Demonstrating it,  
Mankind — no fitter : was the Will Itself  
In fault ?

His forehead pressed the moonlit shelf  
Beside the youngest marble maid awhile ;  
Then, raising it, he thought, with a long smile,  
“ I shall be king again ! ” as he withdrew  
The envied scarf ; into the font he threw  
His crown.

Next day, no poet ! “ Wherefore ? ” asked  
Taurello, when the dance of Jongleurs, masked  
As devils, ended ; “ don’t a song come next ? ”  
The master of the pageant looked perplexed  
Till Naddo’s whisper came to his relief.  
“ His Highness knew what poets were : in brief,  
Had not the tetchy race prescriptive right  
To peevishness, caprice ? or, call it spite,  
One must receive their nature in its length  
And breadth, expect the weakness with the strength ! ”  
— So phrasing, till, his stock of phrases spent,  
The easy-natured soldier smiled assent,  
Settled his portly person, smoothed his chin,  
And nodded that the bull-bait might begin.



## BOOK THE THIRD.

NATURE MAY TRIUMPH THEREFORE;

AND the font took them : let our laurels lie !  
Braid moonfern now with mystic trifoly  
Because once more Goito gets, once more,  
Sordello to itself ! A dream is o'er,  
And the suspended life begins anew ;  
Quiet those throbbing temples, then, subdue  
That cheek's distortion ! Nature's strict embrace,  
Putting aside the Past, shall soon efface  
Its print as well — factitious humors grown  
Over the true — loves, hatreds not his own —  
And turn him pure as some forgotten vest  
Woven of painted byssus, silkiest  
Tufting the Tyrrhene whelk's pearl-sheeted lip,  
Left welter where a trireme let it slip  
I' the sea, and vexed a satrap ; so the stain  
O' the world forsakes Sordello, with its pain,  
Its pleasure : how the tinct loosening escapes,  
Cloud after cloud ! Mantua's familiar shapes  
Die, fair and foul die, fading as they flit,  
Men, women, and the pathos and the wit,  
Wise speech and foolish, deeds to smile or sigh  
For, good, bad, seemly or ignoble, die.  
The last face glances through the eglantines,

The last voice murmurs 'twixt the blossomed vines  
Of Men, of that machine supplied by thought  
To compass self-perception with, he sought  
By forcing half himself — an insane pulse  
Of a god's blood, on clay it could convulse,  
Never transmute — on human sights and sounds,  
To watch the other half with ; irksome bounds  
It ebbs from to its source, a fountain sealed  
Forever. Better sure be unrevealed  
Than part-revealed : Sordello well or ill  
Is finished : then what further use of Will,  
A point in the prime idea not realized,  
An oversight? inordinately prized,  
No less, and pampered with enough of each  
Delight to prove the whole above its reach.  
“ To need become all natures, yet retain  
The law of my own nature — to remain  
Myself, yet yearn . . . as if that chestnut, think,  
Should yearn for this first larch-bloom crisp and pink,  
Or those pale fragrant tears where zephyrs stanch  
March wounds along the fretted pine-tree branch !  
Will and the means to show will, great and small,  
Material, spiritual, — abjure them all  
Save any so distinct, they may be left  
To amuse, not tempt become ! and, thus bereft,  
Just as I first was fashioned would I be !  
Nor, Moon, is it Apollo now, but me  
Thou visitest to comfort and befriend !  
Swim thou into my heart, and there an end,

Since I possess thee ! — nay, thus shut mine eyes  
And know, quite know, by this heart's fall and rise,  
When thou dost bury thee in clouds, and when  
Out-standest : wherefore practise upon men  
To make that plainer to myself ? ”

Slide here

Over a sweet and solitary year  
Wasted : or simply notice change in him —  
How eyes, bright with exploring once, grew dim  
And satiate with receiving. Some distress  
Was caused, too, by a sort of consciousness  
Under the imbecility, — naught kept  
That down ; he slept, but was aware he slept,  
So, frustrated : as who brainsick made pact  
Erst with the overhanging cataract  
To deafen him, yet still distinguished slow  
His own blood's measured clicking at his brow.

To finish. One declining Autumn day —  
Few birds about the heaven chill and gray,  
No wind that cared trouble the tacit woods —  
He sauntered home complacently, their moods  
According, his and Nature's. Every spark  
Of Mantua life was trodden out ; so dark  
The embers, that the Troubadour, who sung  
Hundreds of songs, forgot, its trick his tongue,  
Its craft his brain, how either brought to pass  
Singing at all ; that faculty might class  
With any of Apollo's now. The year  
Began to find its early promise sere

As well. Thus beauty vanishes ; thus stone  
 Outlingers flesh : Nature's and his youth gone,  
 They left the world to you, and wished you joy.  
 When, stopping his benevolent employ,  
 A presage shuddered through the welkin ; harsh  
 The earth's remonstrance followed. 'T was the marsh  
 Gone of a sudden. Mincio, in its place,  
 Laughed, a broad water, in next morning's face,  
 And, where the mists broke up immense and white  
 I' the steady wind, burned like a spilth of light  
 Out of the crashing of a myriad stars.  
 And here was Nature, bound by the same bars  
 Of fate with him !

“No ! youth once gone is gone :  
 Deeds let escape are never to be done.  
 Leaf-fall and grass-spring for the year ; for us —  
 Oh forfeit I unalterably thus  
 My chance ? nor two lives wait me, this to spend  
 Learning save that ? Nature has time to mend  
 Mistake, she knows occasion will recur —  
 Landslip or seabreach, how affects it her  
 With her magnificent resources ? — I  
 Must perish once and perish utterly !  
 Not any strollings now at even-close  
 Down the field-path, Sordello ! by thorn-rows  
 Alive with lamp-flies, swimming spots of fire  
 And dew, outlining the black cypress' spire  
 She waits you at, Elys, who heard you first  
 Woo her, the snow-month through, but ere she durst

Answer 't was April ! Linden-flower-time-long  
Her eyes were on the ground ; 't is July, strong  
Now ; and because white dust-clouds overwhelm  
The woodside, here or by the village elm  
That holds the moon, she meets you, somewhat pale,  
But letting you lift up her coarse flax veil  
And whisper (the damp little hand in yours)  
Of love, heart's love, your heart's love that endures  
Till death. Tush ! No mad mixing with the rout  
Of haggard ribalds wandering about  
The hot torchlit wine-scented island-house  
Where Friedrich holds his wickedest carouse,  
Parading, — to the gay Palermitans,  
Soft Messinese, dusk Saracenic clans  
Nuocera holds, — those tall grave dazzling Norse,  
High-cheeked, lank-haired, toothed whiter than the morse,  
Queens of the caves of jet stalactites,  
He sent his barks to fetch through icy seas,  
The blind night seas without a saving star,  
And here in snowy birdskin robes they are,  
Sordello ! — here, mollitious alcoves gilt  
Superb as Byzant domes that devils built !  
— Ah, Byzant, there again ! no chance to go  
Ever like august pleasant Dandolo,  
Worshipping hearts about him for a wall,  
Conducted, blind eyes, hundred years and all,  
Through vanquished Byzant where friends note for him  
What pillar, marble massive, sardius slim,  
'T were fittest he transport to Venice' Square —

Flattered and promised life to touch them there  
Soon, by his fervid sons of senators !  
No more lifes, deaths, loves, hatreds, peaces, wars —  
Ah, fragments of a whole ordained to be !  
Points in the life I waited ! what are ye  
But roundels of a ladder which appeared  
Awhile the very platform it was reared  
To lift me on ? — that happiness I find  
Proofs of my faith in, even in the blind  
Instinct which bade forego you all unless  
Ye led me past yourselves. Ay, happiness  
Awaited me ; the way life should be used  
Was to acquire, and deeds like you conduced  
To teach it by a self-revealment, deemed  
The very use, so long ! Whatever seemed  
Progress to that, was pleasure ; aught that stayed  
My reaching it — no pleasure. I have laid  
The ladder down ; I climb not ; still, aloft  
The platform stretches ! Blisses strong and soft,  
I dared not entertain, elude me ; yet  
Never of what they promised could I get  
A glimpse till now ! The common sort, the crowd  
Exist, perceive ; with Being are endowed,  
However slight, distinct from what they See,  
However bounded : Happiness must be,  
To feed the first by gleanings from the last,  
Attain its qualities, and slow or fast  
Become what they behold ; such peace-in-strife  
By transmutation, is the Use of Life,  
The Alien turning Native to the soul

Or body — which instructs me ; I am whole  
There and demand a Palma ; had the world  
Been from my soul to a like distance hurled,  
'T were Happiness to make it one with me —  
Whereas I must, ere I begin to Be,  
Include a world, in flesh, I comprehend  
In spirit now ; and this done, what 's to blend  
With ? Naught is Alien in the world — my Will  
Owns all already ; yet can turn it still  
Less Native, since my Means to correspond  
With Will are so unworthy, 't was my bond  
To tread the very joys that tantalize  
Most now, into a grave, never to rise.  
I die then ! Will the rest agree to die ?  
Next Age or no ? Shall its Sordello try  
Clew after clew, and catch at last the clew  
I miss ? — that 's underneath my finger too,  
Twice, thrice a day, perhaps, — some yearning traced  
Deeper, some petty consequence embraced  
Closer ! Why fled I Mantua, then ? — complained  
So much my Will was fettered, yet remained  
Content within a tether half the range  
I could assign it ? — able to exchange  
My ignorance (I felt) for knowledge, and  
Idle because I could thus understand —  
Could e'en have penetrated to its core  
Our mortal mystery, and yet forbore,  
Preferred elaborating in the dark  
My casual stuff, by any wretched spark

Born of my predecessors, though one stroke  
Of mine had brought the flame forth ! Mantua's yoke,  
My minstrel's-trade, was to behold mankind,—  
My own concernment — just to bring my mind  
Behold, just extricate, for my acquist,  
Each object suffered stifle in the mist  
Which hazard, use and blindness could impose  
In their relation to myself."

He rose.

The level wind carried above the firs  
Clouds, the irrevocable travellers,  
Onward.

"Pushed thus into a drowsy copse,  
Arms twine about my neck, each eyelid drops  
Under a humid finger ; while there fleets,  
Outside the screen, a pageant time repeats  
Never again ! To be deposed — immured  
Clandestinely — still petted, still assured  
To govern were fatiguing work — the Sight  
Fleeting meanwhile ! 'T is noontide : wreak ere night  
Somehow my will upon it, rather ! Slake  
This thirst somehow, the poorest impress take  
That serves ! A blasted bud displays you, torn,  
Faint rudiments of the full flower unborn ;  
But who divines what glory coats o'erclasp  
Of the bulb dormant in the mummy's grasp  
Taurello sent" . . .

"Taurello ? Palma sent  
Your Trouvere," (Naddo interposing leant

Over the lost bard's shoulder) — “and, believe,  
You cannot more reluctantly receive  
Than I pronounce her message: we depart  
Together. What avail a poet's heart  
Verona's pomps and gauds? five blades of grass  
Suffice him. News? Why, where your marish was,  
On its mud-banks smoke fast rises after smoke  
I' the valley, like a spout of hell new-broke.  
O, the world's tidings! small your thanks, I guess,  
For them. The father of our Patroness,  
Has played Taurello an astounding trick,  
Parts between Ecelin and Alberic  
His wealth and goes into a convent: both  
Wed Guelfs: the Count and Palma plighted troth  
A week since at Verona: and they want  
You doubtless to contrive the marriage-chant  
Ere Richard storms Ferrara.” “Here was told  
The tale from the beginning — how, made bold  
By Salinguerra's absence, Guelfs had burned  
And pillaged till he unawares returned  
To take revenge: how Azzo and his friend  
Were doing their endeavor, how the end  
Of the siege was nigh, and how the Count, released  
From further care, would with his marriage-feast  
Inaugurate a new and better rule,  
Absorbing thus Romano.

“ Shall I school  
My master,” added Naddo, “ and suggest  
How you may clothe in a poetic vest

These doings, at Verona? Your response  
 To Palma! Wherefore jest? 'Depart at once?'  
 A good resolve! In truth, I hardly hoped  
 So prompt an acquiescence. Have you groped  
 Out wisdom in the wilds here? — Thoughts may be  
 Over-poetical for poetry.

Pearl-white, you poets liken Palma's neck;  
 And yet what spoils an orient like some speck  
 Of genuine white, turning its own white gray?  
 You take me? Curse the cicale!"

One more day.

One eve — appears Verona! Many a group,  
 (You mind) instructed of the osprey's swoop  
 On lynx and ounce, was gathering — Christendom  
 Sure to receive, whate'er the end was, from  
 The evening's purpose cheer or detriment,  
 Since Friedrich only waited some event  
 Like this, of Ghibellins establishing  
 Themselves within Ferrara, ere, as King  
 Of Lombardy, he'd glad descend there, wage  
 Old warfare with the Pontiff, disengage  
 His barons from the burghers, and restore  
 The rule of Charlemagne, broken of yore  
 By Hildebrand.

In the palace, each by each,  
 Sordello sat and Palma: little speech  
 At first in that dim closet, face with face  
 (Despite the tumult in the market-place)  
 Exchanging quick low laughters: now would rush

Word upon word to meet a sudden flush,  
A look left off, a shifting lips' surmise —  
But for the most part their two histories  
Ran best thro' the locked fingers and linked arms.  
And so the night flew on with its alarms  
Till in burst one of Palma's retinue ;  
“ Now, Lady ! ” gasped he. Then arose the two  
And leaned into Verona's air, dead-still.  
A balcony lay black beneath until  
Out, 'mid a gush of torchfire, gray-haired men  
Came on it and harangued the people : then  
Sea-like that people surging to and fro  
Shouted, “ Hale forth the Carroch — trumpets, ho,  
A flourish ! run it in the ancient grooves —  
Back from the bell ! Hammer ! that whom behooves  
May hear the League is up ! Peal ! learn who list,  
Verona means not be the first break tryst  
To-morrow with the League ! ”

Enough. Now turn —

Over the eastern cypresses : discern —  
Is any beacon set a-glimmer ?

Rang

The air with shouts that overpowered the clang  
Of the incessant carroch, even : “ Haste —  
The Candle 's at the gateway ! ere it waste,  
Each soldier stand beside it, armed to march  
With Tiso Sampier through the eastern arch ! ”  
Ferrara 's succored, Palma !

Once again

They sat together ; some strange thing in train  
To say, so difficult was Palma's place  
In taking, with a coy fastidious grace  
Like the bird's flutter ere it fix and feed.  
But when she felt she held her friend indeed  
Safe, she threw back her curls, began implant  
Her lessons ; telling of another want  
Goito's quiet nourished than his own ;  
Palma — to serve, as him — be served, alone  
Importing ; Agnes' milk so neutralized  
The blood of Ecelin. Nor be surprised  
If, while Sordello fain had captive led  
Nature, in dream was Palma wholly subjected  
To some out-soul, which dawned not though she pined  
Delaying till its advent, heart and mind,  
Their life. " How dared I let expand the force  
Within me, till some out-soul, whose resource  
It grew for, should direct it ? Every law  
Of life, its every fitness, every flaw,  
Must One determine whose corporeal shape  
Would be no other than the prime escape  
And revelation to me of a Will  
Orb-like o'ershrouded and inscrutable  
Above, save at the point which, I should know,  
Shone that myself, my powers, might overflow  
So far, so much ; as now it signified  
Which earthly shape it henceforth chose my guide,  
Whose mortal lip selected to declare  
Its oracles, what fleshly garb would wear ;

— The first of intimations, whom to love ;  
The next, how love him. Seemed that orb, above  
The castle-covert and the mountain-close,  
Slow in appearing, — if beneath it rose  
Cravings, aversions, — did our green precinct  
Take pride in me, at unawares distinct  
With this or that endowment, — how, represt  
At once, such jetting power shrunk to the rest !  
Was I to have a chance touch spoil me, leave  
My spirit thence unfitted to receive  
The consummating spell ? — that spell so near  
Moreover ! ‘ Waits he not the waking year ?  
His almond-blossoms must be honey-ripe  
By this ; to welcome him, fresh runnels stripe  
The thawed ravines ; because of him, the wind  
Walks like a herald. ‘ I shall surely find  
Him now ! ’

And chief, that earnest April morn  
Of Richard’s Love-court, was it time, so worn  
And white my cheek, so idly my blood beat,  
Sitting that morn beside the Lady’s feet  
And saying as she prompted ; till outburst  
One face from all the faces — not then first  
I knew it ; where in maple chamber glooms,  
Crowned with what sanguine-heart pomegranate blooms  
Advanced it ever ? Men’s acknowledgment  
Sanctioned my own : ‘ t was taken, Palma’s bent, —  
Sordello, accepted.

And the Tuscan dumb

Sat scheming, scheming. Ecelin would come  
Gaunt, scared, ‘ Cesano baffles me,’ he’d say :  
‘ Better I fought it out, my father’s way !  
Strangle Ferrara in its drowning flats,  
And you and your Taurello yonder — what’s  
Romano’s business there ?’ An hour’s concern  
To cure the froward Chief ! — induced return  
Much heartened from those overmeaning eyes,  
Wound up to persevere, — his enterprise  
Marked out anew, its exigent of wit  
Apportioned, — she at liberty to sit  
And scheme against the next emergence, I —  
To covet her Taurello-sprite, made fly  
Or fold the wing — to con your horoscope  
For leave command those steely shafts shoot ope,  
Or straight assuage their blinding eagerness  
To blank smooth snow. What semblance of success  
To any of my plans for making you  
Mine and Romano’s ? Break the first wall through,  
Tread o’er the ruins of the Chief, supplant  
His sons beside, still, vainest were the vaunt :  
There, Salinguerra would obstruct me sheer,  
And the insuperable Tuscan, here,  
Stayed me ! But one wild eve that Lady died  
In her lone chamber : only I beside :  
Taurello far at Naples, and my sire  
At Padua, Ecelin away in ire  
With Alberic. She held me thus — a clutch.  
To make our spirits as our bodies touch —

And so began flinging the Past up, heaps  
Of uncouth treasure from their sunless sleeps  
Within her soul ; deeds rose along with dreams,  
Fragments of many miserable schemes,  
Secrets, more secrets, then — no, not the last —  
'Mongst others, like a casual trick o' the Past,  
How . . . ay, she told me, gathering up her face  
— All left of it, into one arch-grimace  
To die with . . .

Friend, 't is gone ! but not the fear  
Of that fell laughing, heard as now I hear.  
Nor faltered voice, nor seemed her heart grow weak,  
When i' the midst abrupt she ceased to speak  
— Dead, as to serve a purpose, mark ! — for in  
Rushed o' the very instant Ecelin  
(How summoned, who divines ?) — looking as if  
He understood why Adelaide lay stiff  
Already in my arms ; for, ' Girl, how must  
I manage Este in the matter thrust  
Upon me, how unravel your bad coil ? —  
Since ' (he declared) ' t is on your brow — a soil  
Like hers, there ! ' then in the same breath, ' he lacked  
No counsel after all, had signed no pact  
With devils, nor was treason here or there,  
Goito or Vicenza, his affair :  
He buried it in Adelaide's deep grave,  
Would begin life afresh, now, — would not slave  
For any Friedrich's nor Taurello's sake !  
What booted him to meddle or to make

In Lombardy ?' And afterward I knew  
 The meaning of his promise to undo  
 All she had done — why marriages were made,  
 New friendships entered on, old followers paid  
 With curses for their pains, — new friends' amaze  
 At height, when, passing out by Gate St. Blaise,  
 He stopped short in Vicenza, bent his head  
 Over a friar's neck, — 'had vowed,' he said,  
 'Long since, nigh thirty years, because his wife  
 And child were saved there, to bestow his life  
 On God, his gettings on the Church.'

## Exiled

Within Goito, still one dream beguiled  
 My days and nights ; 't was found, the orb I sought  
 To serve, those glimpses came of Fomalhaut,  
 No other : but how serve it? — authorize  
 You and Romano mingle destinies ?  
 And straight Romano's angel stood beside  
 Me who had else been Boniface's bride,  
 For Salinguerra 't was, with neck low bent,  
 And voice lightened to music, (as he meant  
 To learn not teach me,) who withdrew the pall  
 From the dead Past and straight revived it all,  
 Making me see how first Romano waxed,  
 Wherefore he waned now, why, if I relaxed  
 My grasp (even I!) would drop a thing effete,  
 Frayed by itself, unequal to complete  
 Its course, and counting every step astray  
 A gain so much. Romano, every way

Stable, a Lombard House now — why start back  
Into the very outset of its track ?  
This patching-principle which late allied  
Our House with other Houses — what beside  
Concerned the apparition, the first Knight  
Who followed Conrad hither in such plight  
His utmost wealth was summed in his one steed ?  
For Ecelo, that prowler, was decreed  
A task, in the beginning hazardous  
To him as ever task can be to us ;  
But did the weather-beaten thief despair  
When first our crystal cincture of warm air, —  
That binds the Trevisan, — as its spice-belt  
(Crusaders say) the tract where Jesus dwelt, —  
Furtive he pierced, and Este was to face —  
Despaired Saponian strength of Lombard grace ?  
Tried he at making surer aught made sure,  
Maturing what already was mature ?  
No ; his heart prompted Ecelo, ‘ Confront  
Este, inspect yourself. What’s nature ? Wont.  
Discard three-parts your nature, and adopt  
The rest as an advantage ! ’ Old strength propped  
The man who first grew Podestà among  
The Vincentines, no less than, while there sprung  
His palace up in Padua like a threat,  
Their noblest spied a grace, unnoticed yet  
In Conrad’s crew. Thus far the object gained,  
Romano was established — has remained —  
For are you not Italian, truly peers

With Este? 'Azzo' better soothes our ears  
 Than 'Alberic?' or is this lion's-crine  
 From over-mounts' (this yellow hair of mine)  
 'So weak a graft on Agnes Este's stock?'  
 (Thus went he on with something of a mock)  
 'Wherefore recoil, then, from the very fate  
 Conceded you, refuse to imitate  
 Your model farther? Este long since left  
 Being mere Este: as a blade its heft,  
 Este required the Pope to further him:  
 And you, the Kaiser — whom your father's whim  
 Foregoes or, better, never shall forego  
 If Palma dare pursue what Ecelo  
 Commenced, but Ecelin desists from: just  
 As Adelaide of Susa could intrust  
 Her donative, — her Piedmont given the Pope,  
 Her Alpine-pass for him to shut or ope  
 'Twixt France and Italy, — to the superb  
 Matilda's perfecting, — so, lest aught curb  
 Our Adelaide's great counter-project for  
 Giving her Trentine to the Emperor  
 With passage here from Germany, — shall you  
 Take it, — my slender plodding talent, too!'  
 — Urged me Taurello with his half-smile.

He

As Patron of the scattered family  
 Conveyed me to his Mantua, kept in bruit  
 Azzo's alliances and Richard's suit  
 Until, the Kaiser excommunicate,

‘Nothing remains,’ Taurello said, ‘but wait  
Some rash procedure: Palma was the link,  
As Agnes’ child, between us, and they shrink  
From losing Palma: judge if we advance,  
Your father’s method, your inheritance !’  
That day I was bethrothed to Boniface  
At Padua by Taurello’s self, took place  
The outrage of the Ferrarese: again,  
That day I sought Verona with the train  
Agreed for, — by Taurello’s policy  
Convicting Richard of the fault, since we  
Were present to annul or to confirm, —  
Richard, whose patience had outstayed its term,  
Quitted Verona for the siege.

And now

What glory may engird Sordello’s brow  
Through this? A month since at Oliero slunk  
All that was Ecelin into a monk;  
But how could Salinguerra so forget  
His liege of thirty years as grudge even yet  
One effort to recover him? He sent  
Forthwith the tidings of this last event  
To Ecelin — declared that he, despite  
The recent folly, recognized his right  
To order Salinguerra: ‘Should he wring  
Its uttermost advantage out, or fling  
This chance away? Or were his sons now Head  
Of the House?’ Through me Taurello’s missive sped;  
My father’s answer will by me return.

Behold! 'For him,' he writes, 'no more concern  
 With strife than, for his children, with fresh plots  
 Of Friedrich. Old engagements out he blots  
 For aye: Taurello shall no more subserve,  
 Nor Ecelin impose.' Lest this unnerve  
 Taurello at this juncture, slack his grip  
 Of Richard, suffer the occasion slip, —  
 I, in his sons' default (who, mating with  
 Este, forsake Romano as the frith  
 Its mainsea for the firmland, sea makes head  
 Against) I stand, Romano, — in their stead  
 Assume the station they desert, and give  
 Still, as the Kaiser's representative,  
 Taurello license he demands. Midnight —  
 Morning — by noon to-morrow, making light  
 Of the League's issue, we, in some gay weed  
 Like yours, disguised together, may precede  
 The arbitrators to Ferrara: reach  
 Him, let Taurello's noble accents teach  
 The rest! then say if I have misconceived  
 Your destiny, too readily believed  
 The Kaiser's cause your own!"

And Palma's fled.

Though no affirmative disturbs the head,  
 A dying lamp-flame sinks and rises o'er,  
 Like the alighted planet Pollux wore,  
 Until, morn breaking, he resolves to be  
 Gate-vein of this heart's blood of Lombardy,  
 Soul of this body — to wield this aggregate

Of souls and bodies, and so conquer fate  
Though he should live — a centre of disgust  
Even — apart, core of the outward crust  
He vivified, assimilated. Thus  
I bring Sordello to the rapturous  
Exclaim at the crowd's cry, because one round  
Of life was quite accomplished ; and he found  
Not only that a soul, whate'er its might,  
Is insufficient to its own delight,  
Both in corporeal organs and in skill  
By means of such to body forth its Will —  
And, after, insufficient to apprise  
Men of that Will, oblige them recognize  
The Hid by the Revealed — but that, the last  
Nor lightest of the struggles overpast,  
His Will, bade abdicate, which would not void  
The throne, might sit there, suffer be enjoyed  
Mankind, a varied and divine array  
Incapable of homage, the first way,  
Nor fit to render incidentally  
Tribute connived at, taken by the by,  
In joys. If thus with warrant to rescind  
The ignominious exile of mankind —  
Whose proper service, ascertained intact  
As yet, (to be by him themselves made act,  
Not watch Sordello acting each of them)  
Was to secure — if the true diadem  
Seemed imminent while our Sordello drank  
The wisdom of that golden Palma, — thank

*Jack  
Reader*

Verona's Lady in her Citadel

Founded by Gaulish Brennus, legends tell :

And truly when she left him, the sun reared

A head like the first clamberer's that peered

A-top the Capitol, his face on flame

With triumph, triumphing till Manlius came.

Nor slight too much my rhymes — that spring, dispread,

Dispart, disperse, lingering overhead

Like an escape of angels ! Rather say,

My transcendental platan ! mounting gay

(An archimage so courts a novice-queen)

With tremulous silvered trunk, whence branches sheen

Laugh out, thick-foliaged next, a-shiver soon

With colored buds, then glowing like the moon

One mild flame, — last a pause, a burst, and all

Her ivory limbs are smothered by a fall,

Bloom-flinders and fruit-sparkles and leaf-dust,

Ending the weird work prosecuted just

For her amusement; he decrepit, stark,

Dozes ; her uncontrolled delight may mark

Apart —

Yet not so, surely never so !

Only, as good my soul were suffered go

O'er the lagune : forth fare thee, put aside

Entrance thy synod, as a god may glide

Out of the world he fills, and leave it mute

For myriad ages as we men compute,

Returning into it without a break

O' the consciousness ! They sleep, and I awake

O'er the lagune.

Sordello said once, "Note,  
In just such songs as Eglamor (say) wrote  
With heart and soul and strength, for he believed  
Himself achieving all to be achieved  
By singer — in such songs you find alone  
Completeness, judge the song and singer one,  
And either's purpose answered, his in it  
Or its in him: while from true works (to wit  
Sordello's dream-performances that will  
Be never more than dreamed) escapes there still  
Some proof, the singer's proper life was 'neath  
The life his song exhibits, this a sheath  
To that; a passion and a knowledge far  
Transcending these, majestic as they are,  
Smouldered; his lay was but an episode  
In the bard's life: which evidence you owed  
To some slight weariness, some looking-off  
Or start-away. The childish skit or scoff  
In "Charlemagne," (his poem, dreamed divine  
In every point except one silly line  
About the restiff daughters !) — what may lurk  
In that? 'My life commenced before that work,  
(Thus I interpret the significance  
Of the bard's start aside and look askance)  
'My life continues after: on I fare  
With no more stopping, possibly, no care  
To note the undercurrent, the why and how,  
Where, when, of the deeper life, as thus just now.  
But, silent, shall I cease to live? Alas

For you ! who sigh, ' When shall it come to pass  
We read that story ? How will he compress  
The future gains, his life's true business,  
Into the better lay which — that one flout,  
Howe'er inopportune it be, lets out —  
Engrosses him already, though professed  
To meditate with us eternal rest,  
And partnership in all his life has found ?  
'T is but a sailor's promise, weather-bound :  
' Strike sail, slip cable, here the bark be moored  
For once, the awning stretched, the poles assured !  
Noontide above ; except the wave's crisp dash,  
Or buzz of colibri, or tortoise' splash,  
The margin 's silent : out with every spoil  
Made in our tracking, coil by mighty coil,  
This serpent of a river to his head  
I' the midst ! Admire each treasure, as we spread  
The bank, to help us tell our history  
Aright : give ear, endeavor to descry  
The groves of giant rushes, how they grew  
Like demons' endlong tresses we sailed through,  
What mountains yawned, forests to give us vent  
Opened, each doleful side, yet on we went  
Till . . . may that beetle (shake your cap) attest  
The springing of a land-wind from the West !'  
— ' Wherefore ? Ah yes, you frolic it to-day !  
To-morrow, and the pageant 's moved away  
Down to the poorest tent-pole : we and you  
Part company : no other may pursue

Eastward your voyage, be informed what fate  
Intends, if triumph or decline await  
The tempter of the everlasting steppe.'

I muse this on a ruined palace-step  
At Venice: why should I break off, nor sit  
Longer upon my step, exhaust the fit  
England gave birth to? Who's adorable  
Enough reclaim a — no Sordello's Will  
Alack! — be queen to me? That Bassanese  
Bused among her smoking fruit-boats? These  
Perhaps from our delicious Asolo  
Who twinkle, pigeons o'er the portico . . .  
Not prettier, bind June lilies into sheaves  
To deck the bridge-side chapel, dropping leaves  
Soiled by their own loose gold-meal? Ah, beneath  
The cool arch stoops she, brownest-cheek! Her wreath  
Endures a month — a half-month — if I make  
A queen of her, continue for her sake  
Sordello's story? Nay, that Paduan girl  
Splashes with barer legs where a live whirl  
In the dead black Giudecca proves sea-weed  
Drifting has sucked down three, four, all indeed  
Save one pale-red striped, pale-blue turbaned post  
For gondolas.

You sad dishevelled ghost  
That pluck at me and point, are you advised  
I breathe? Let stay those girls (e'en her disguised  
— Jewels in the locks that love no crownet like  
Their native field-buds and the green wheat spike,

So fair! — who left this end of June's turmoil,  
Shook off, as might a lily its gold soil,  
Pomp, save a foolish gem or two, and free  
In dream, came join the peasants o'er the sea.)  
Look they too happy, too tricked out? Confess  
There is such niggard stock of happiness  
To share, that, do one's uttermost, dear wretch,  
One labors ineffectually to stretch  
It o'er you so that mother and children, both  
May equitably flaunt the sumpter-cloth!  
Divide the robe yet farther: be content  
With seeing just a score pre-eminent  
Through shreds of it, acknowledged happy wights,  
Engrossing what should furnish all, by rights —  
For, these in evidence, you clearlier claim  
A like garb for the rest, — grace all, the same  
As these my peasants. I ask youth and strength  
And health for each of you, not more — at length  
Grown wise, who asked at home that the whole race  
Might add the spirit's to the body's grace,  
And all be dizened out as chiefs and bards.  
But in this magic weather one discards  
Much old requirement — Venice seems a type  
Of Life, — 'twixt blue and blue extends, a stripe,  
As Life, the somewhat, hangs 'twixt naught and naught  
'T is Venice, and 't is Life — as good you sought  
To spare me the Piazza's slippery stone,  
Or keep me to the unchoked canals alone,  
As hinder Life the evil with the good

Which make up Living, rightly understood.  
Only, do finish something! Peasants or queens,  
Take them, made happy by whatever means,  
Parade them for the common credit, vouch  
That a luckless residue, we send to crouch  
In corners out of sight, was just as framed  
For happiness, its portion might have claimed  
As well, and so, obtaining it, had stalked  
Fastuous as any! — such my project, balked  
Already ; I hardly venture to adjust  
The first rags, when you find me. To mistrust  
Me! — nor unreasonably. You, no doubt,  
Have the true knack of tiring suitors out  
With those thin lips on tremble, lashless eyes  
Inveterately tear-shot — there, be wise  
Mistress of mine, there, there, as if I meant  
You insult! Shall your friend (not slave) be shent  
For speaking home? Beside, care-bit, erased,  
Broken-up beauties ever took my taste  
Supremely, and I love you more, far more  
Than her I looked should foot Life's temple-floor.  
Years ago, leagues at distance, when and where  
A whisper came, “ Let others seek! — thy care  
Is found, thy life's provision ; if thy race  
Should be thy mistress, and into one face  
The many faces crowd ? ” Ah, had I, judge,  
Or no, your secret? Rough apparel — grudge  
All ornaments save tag or tassel worn  
To hint we are not thoroughly forlorn —

Slouch bonnet, unloop mantle, careless go  
Alone (that's saddest but it must be so)  
Through Venice, sing now and now glance aside,  
Aught desultory or undignified,—  
Then, ravishingest lady, will you pass  
Or not each formidable group, the mass  
Before the Basilic (that feast gone by,  
God's great day of the Corpus Domini)  
And, wistfully foregoing proper men,  
Come timid up to me for alms? And then  
The luxury to hesitate, feign do  
Some unexampled grace! — when, whom but you  
Dare I bestow your own upon? And here  
Further before you say, it is to sneer  
I call you ravishing; for I regret  
Little that she, whose early foot was set  
Forth as she'd plant it on a pedestal,  
Now, i' the silent city, seems to fall  
Toward me — no wreath, only a lip's unrest  
To quiet, surcharged eyelids to be pressed  
Dry of their tears upon my bosom. Strange  
Such sad chance should produce in thee such change,  
My love! warped souls and bodies! yet God spoke  
Of right-hand, foot and eye — selects our yoke,  
Sordello, as your poetship may find!  
So, sleep upon my shoulder, child, nor mind  
Their foolish talk; we'll manage reinstate  
Your old worth; ask moreover, when they prate  
Of evil men past hope, "don't each contrive,

Despite the evil you abuse, to live? —  
Keeping, each losel, through a maze of lies,  
His own conceit of truth? to which he hies  
By obscure windings, tortuous, if you will,  
But to himself not inaccessible;  
He sees truth, and his lies are for the crowd  
Who cannot see; some fancied right allowed  
His vilest wrong, empowered the fellow clutch  
One pleasure from a multitude of such  
Denied him." Then assert, "all men appear  
To think all better than themselves, by here  
Trusting a crowd they wrong; but really," say,  
"All men think all men stupider than they,  
Since, save themselves, no other comprehends  
The complicated scheme to make amends  
— Evil, the scheme by which, thro' Ignorance,  
Good labors to exist." A slight advance, —  
Merely to find the sickness you die through,  
And naught beside! but if one can't eschew  
One's portion in the common lot, at least  
One can avoid an ignorance increased  
Tenfold by dealing out hint after hint  
How naught were like dispensing without stint  
The water of life — so easy to dispense  
Beside, when one has probed the centre whence  
Commotion's born — could tell you of it all!  
" — Meantime, just meditate my madrigal  
O' the mugwort that conceals a dew-drop safe!"  
What, dullard? we and you in smothery chafe,

Babes, baldheads, stumbled thus far into Zin  
The Horrid, getting neither out nor in,  
A hungry sun above us, sands that bung  
Our throats,— each dromedary lolls a tongue,  
Each camel churns a sick and frothy chap,  
And you, 'twixt tales of Potiphar's mishap,  
And sonnets on the earliest ass that spoke,  
— Remark, you wonder any one needs choke  
With founts about! Potsher'd him, Gibeonites!  
While awkwardly enough your Moses smites  
The rock, though he forego his Promised Land,  
Thereby, have Satan claim his carcass, and  
Figure as Metaphysic Poet . . . ah  
Mark ye the dim first oozings? Meribah!  
Then, quaffing at the fount my courage gained,  
Recall — not that I prompt ye — who explained . . .  
“Presumptuous!” interrupts one. You, not I  
“T is, brother, marvel at and magnify  
Such office: “office,” quotha? can we get  
To the beginning of the office yet?  
What do we here? simply experiment  
Each on the other's power and its intent  
When elsewhere tasked, — if this of mine were trucked  
For yours to either's good, — we watch construct,  
In short, an engine: with a finished one,  
What it can do, is all, — naught, how 't is done.  
But this of ours yet in probation, dusk  
A kernel of strange wheelwork through its husk  
Grows into shape by quarters and by halves;

Remark this tooth's spring, wonder what that valve's  
Fall bodes, presume each faculty's device,  
Make out each other more or less precise —  
The scope of the whole engine's to be proved ;  
We die : which means to say, the whole's removed,  
Dismounted wheel by wheel, this complex gin, —  
To be set up anew elsewhere, begin  
A task indeed, but with a clearer clime  
Than the murk lodgment of our building-time.  
And then, I grant you, it behooves forget  
How 't is done — all that must amuse us yet  
So long : and, while you turn upon your heel,  
Pray that I be not busy slitting steel  
Or shredding brass, camped on some virgin shore  
Under a cluster of fresh stars, before  
I name a tithe o' the wheels I trust to do !  
So occupied, then, are we : hitherto,  
At present, and a weary while to come,  
The office of ourselves, — nor blind nor dumb,  
And seeing somewhat of man's state, — has been,  
For the worst of us, to say they so have seen ;  
For the better, what it was they saw ; the best  
Impart the gift of seeing to the rest :  
“ So that I glance,” says such an one, “ around,  
And there's no face but I can read profound  
Disclosures in ; this stands for hope, that — fear,  
And for a speech, a deed in proof, look here !  
‘ Stoop, else the strings of blossom, where the nuts  
O'erarch, will blind thee ! said I not ? she shuts

Both eyes this time, so close the hazels meet !

Thus, prisoned in the Piombi, I repeat  
 Events one rove occasioned, o'er and o'er,  
 Putting 'twixt me and madness evermore  
 Thy sweet shape, Zanze ! therefore stoop !'

'That's truth !'

(Adjudge you) 'the incarcerated youth  
 Would say that !'

'Youth ? Plara the bard ? Set down  
 That Plara spent his youth in a grim town  
 Whose cramped ill-featured streets huddled about  
 The minster for protection, never out  
 Of its black belfry's shade and its bells' roar.  
 The brighter shone the suburb, — all the more  
 Ugly and absolute that shade's reproof  
 Of any chance escape of joy, — some roof,  
 Taller than they, allowed the rest detect  
 Before the sole permitted laugh (suspect  
 Who could, 'twas meant for laughter, that ploughed cheek's  
 Repulsive gleam !) when the sun stopped both peaks  
 Of the cleft belfry like a fiery wedge,  
 Then sunk, a Hugh flame on its socket's edge,  
 With leavings on the gray glass oriel-pane  
 Ghastly some minutes more. No fear of rain —  
 The minster minded that ! in heaps the dust  
 Lay everywhere. This town, the minster's trust,  
 Held Plara ; who, its denizen, bade hail  
 In twice twelve sonnets, Tempe's dewy vale.'  
 'Exact the town, the minster and the street !'

‘As all mirth triumphs, sadness means defeat:  
Lust triumphs and is gay, Love’s triumphed o’er  
And sad: but Lucio’s sad. I said before,  
Love’s sad, not Lucio; one who loves may be  
As gay his love has leave to hope, as he  
Downcast that lusts’ desire escapes the springe:  
’T is of the mood itself I speak, what tinge  
Determines it, else colorless,— or mirth,  
Or melancholy, as from heaven or earth.’

‘Ay, that’s the variation’s gist!’ Indeed?  
Thus far advanced in safety then, proceed!  
And having seen too what I saw, be bold  
And next encounter what I do behold  
(That’s sure) but bid you take on trust! Attack  
The use and purpose of such sights? Alack,  
Not so unwisely does the crowd dispense  
On Salinguerras praise in preference  
To the Sordellos: men of action, these!  
Who, seeing just as little as you please,  
Yet turn that little to account,— engage  
With, do not gaze at,— carry on, a stage,  
The work o’ the world, not merely make report  
The work existed ere their day! In short,  
When at some future no-time a brave band  
Sees, using what it sees, then shake my hand  
In heaven, my brother! Meanwhile where’s the hurt  
Of keeping the Makers-see on the alert,  
At whose defection mortals stare aghast  
As though heaven’s bounteous windows were slammed fast

Incontinent? whereas all you, beneath,  
Should scowl at, curse them, bruise lips, break their teeth  
Who ply the pullies, for neglecting you :  
And therefore have I moulded, made anew  
A Man, and give him to be turned and tried,  
Be angry with or pleased at. On your side,  
Have ye times, places, actors of your own ?  
Try them upon Sordello when full-grown,  
And then — ah then ! If Hercules first parched  
His foot in Egypt only to be marched  
A sacrifice for Jove with pomp to suit,  
What chance have I ? The demigod was mute  
Till, at the altar, where time out of mind  
Such guests became oblations, chaplets twined  
His forehead long enough, and he began  
Slaying the slayers, nor escaped a man.  
Take not affront, my gentle audience ! whom  
No Hercules shall make his hecatomb,  
Believe, nor from his brows your chaplet rend —  
That 's your kind suffrage, yours, my patron-friend,  
Whose great verse blares unintermittent on  
Like your own trumpeter at Marathon, —  
You who, Platæas and Salamis being scant,  
Put up with Ætna for a stimulant —  
And did well, I acknowledged, as he loomed  
Over the midland sea last month, presumed  
Long, lay demolished in the blazing West  
At eve, while towards him tilting cloudlets prest  
Like Persian ships at Salamis. Friend, wear

A crest proud as desert while I declare  
Had I a flawless ruby fit to wring  
↘ Tears of its color from that painted king  
Who lost it, I would, for that smile which went  
To my heart, fling it in the sea, content,  
Wearing your verse in place, an amulet  
Sovereign against all passion, wear and fret!  
My English Eyebright, if you are not glad  
That, as I stopped my task awhile, the sad  
Disheveled form, wherein I put mankind  
To come at times and keep my pact in mind,  
Renewed me,— hear no crickets in the hedge,  
Nor let a glowworm spot the river's edge  
At home, and may the summer showers gush  
Without a warning from the missel thrush!  
So, to our business, now — the fate of such  
As find our common nature — overmuch  
Despised because restricted and unfit  
To bear the burden they impose on it —  
Cling when they would discard it; craving strength  
To leap from the allotted world, at length  
They do leap,— flounder on without a term,  
Each a god's germ, doomed to remain a germ  
In unexpanded infancy, unless . . .  
But that's the story — dull enough, confess!  
There might be fitter subjects to allure;  
Still, neither misconceive my portraiture  
Nor undervalue its adornments quaint:  
What seems a fiend perchance may prove a saint.

Ponder a story ancient pens transmit,  
Then say if you condemn me or acquit.  
John the Beloved, banished Antioch  
For Patmos, bade collectively his flock  
Farewell, but set apart the closing eve  
To comfort those his exile most would grieve,  
He knew: a touching spectacle, that house  
In motion to receive him! Xanthus' spouse  
You missed, made panther's meat a month since; but  
Xanthus himself (his nephew 't was, they shut  
'Twixt boards and sawed asunder) Polycarp,  
Soft Charicle, next year no wheel could warp  
To swear by Cæsar's fortune, with the rest  
Were ranged; thro' whom the gray disciple prest,  
Busily blessing right and left, just stopt  
To pat one infant's curls, the hangman cropt  
Soon after, reached the portal — on its hinge  
The door turns and he enters — what quick twinge  
Ruins the smiling mouth, those wide eyes fix  
Whereon, why like some spectral candlestick's  
Branch the disciple's arms? Dead swooned he, woke  
Anon, heaved sigh, made shift to gasp, heart-broke,  
"Get thee behind me, Satan! have I toiled  
To no more purpose? is the gospel foiled  
Here too, and o'er my son's, my Xanthus' hearth,  
Portrayed with sooty garb and features swarth —  
Ah Xanthus, am I to thy roof beguiled  
To see the — the — the Devil domiciled?"  
Whereto sobbed Xanthus, "Father, 't is yourself

Installed, a limning which our utmost pelf  
Went to procure against to-morrow's loss ;  
And that 's no twy-prong, but a pastoral cross,  
You 're painted with ! " His puckered brows unfold —  
And you shall hear Sordello's story told.

## BOOK THE FOURTH.

MEN SUFFERED MUCH,

MEANTIME Ferrara lay in rueful case ;  
The lady-city, for whose sole embrace  
Her pair of suitors struggled, felt their arms  
A brawny mischief to the fragile charms  
They tugged for — one discovering that to twist  
Her tresses twice or thrice about his wrist  
Secured a point of vantage — one, how best  
He'd parry that by planting in her breast  
His elbow-spike — each party too intent  
For noticing, howe'er the battle went,  
The conqueror would but have a corpse to kiss.  
“ May Boniface be duly damned for this ! ”  
— Howled some old Ghibellin, as up he turned,  
From the wet heap of rubbish where they burned  
His house, a little skull with dazzling teeth :  
“ A boon, sweet Christ — let Salinguerra seethe  
In hell forever, Christ, and let myself  
Be there to laugh at him ! ” — moaned some young Guelf  
Stumbling upon a shrivelled hand nailed fast  
To the charred lintel of the doorway, last  
His father stood within to bid him speed.  
The thoroughfares were overrun with weed  
— Docks, quitchgrass, loathly mallows no man plants.

The stranger, none of its inhabitants  
Crept out of doors to taste fresh air again,  
And ask the purpose of a sumptuous train  
Admitted on a morning; every town  
Of the East League was come by envoy down  
To treat for Richard's ransom: here you saw  
The Vicentine, here snowy oxen draw  
The Paduan carroch, its vermillion cross  
On its white field. A-tiptoe o'er the fosse  
Looked Legate Montelungo wistfully  
After the flock of steeples he might spy  
In Este's time, gone (doubts he) long ago  
To mend the ramparts — sure the laggards know  
The Pope's as good as here! They paced the streets  
More soberly. At last, "Taurello greets  
The League," announced a pursuivant, — "will match  
Its courtesy, and labors to despatch  
At earliest Tito, Friedrich's Pretor, sent  
On pressing matters from his post at Trent,  
With Mainard Count of Tyrol, — simply waits  
Their going to receive the delegates."  
"Tito!" Our delegates exchanged a glance,  
And, keeping the main way, admired askance  
The lazy engines of outlandish birth,  
Couched like a king each on its bank of earth —  
Arbalist, manganel, and catapult;  
While stationed by, as waiting a result,  
Lean silent gangs of mercenaries ceased  
Working to watch the strangers. "This, at least,

Were better spared ; he scarce presumes gainsay  
The League's decision ! Get our friend away  
And profit for the future : how else teach  
Fools 't is not safe to stray within claw's reach  
Ere Salinguerra's final gasp be blown ?  
Those mere convulsive scratches find the bone.  
Who bade him bloody the spent osprey's nare ? ”

The carrochs halted in the public square.  
Pennons of every blazon once a-flaunt,  
Men prattled, freelier that the crested gaunt  
White ostrich with a horse-shoe in her beak  
Was missing, and whoever chose might speak  
*Ecelin* boldly out : so, — “ Ecelin  
Needed his wife to swallow half the sin  
And sickens by himself : the Devil's whelp,  
He styles his son, dwindleth away, no help  
From conserves, your fine triple-curded froth  
Of virgin's blood, your Venice viper-broth —  
Eh ? Jubilate ! Peace ! no little word  
You utter here that 's not distinctly heard  
Up at Oliero : he was absent sick  
When we besieged Bassano — who, i' the thick  
O' the work, perceived the progress Azzo made,  
Like Ecelin, through his witch Adelaide ?  
She managed it so well that, night by night,  
At their bed-foot stood up a soldier-sprite  
First fresh, pale by and by without a wound,  
And, when it came with eyes filmed as in swoond,  
They knew the place was taken. Ominous

That Ghibellins should get what cautious  
Old Redbeard sought from Azzo's sire to wrench  
Vainly; Saint George contrived his town a trench  
O' the marshes, an impermeable bar.

Young Ecelin is meant the tutelar  
Of Padua, rather; veins embrace upon  
His hand like Brenta and Bacchiglion.

What now? The founts! God's bread, touch not a  
A crawling hell of carrion — every tank [plank!  
Choke full! — found out just now to Cino's cost —

The same who gave Taurello up for lost,  
And, making no account of fortune's freaks,  
Refused to budge from Padua then, but sneaks  
Back now with Concorezzi — 'faith! they drag  
Their carroch to San Vital, plant the flag  
On his own palace so adroitly razed  
He knew it not; a sort of Guelf folk gazed  
And laughed apart; Cino disliked their air —  
Must pluck up spirit, show he does not care —  
Seats himself on the tank's edge — will begin  
To hum, *za, za, Cavaler Ecelin* —

A silence; he gets warmer, clinks to chime,  
Now both feet plough the ground, deeper each time,  
At last, *za, za*, and up with a fierce kick  
Comes his own mother's face caught by the thick  
Gray hair about his spur!"

Which means, they lift  
The covering, Salinguerra made a shift  
To stretch upon the truth; as well avoid

Further disclosures ; leave them thus employed.  
Our dropping Autumn morning clears apace,  
And poor Ferrara puts a softened face  
On her misfortunes. Let us scale this tall  
Huge foursquare line of red brick garden-wall  
Bastioned within by trees of every sort  
On three sides, slender, spreading, long and short,  
— Each grew as it contrived, the poplar ramped,  
The fig-tree reared itself, — but stark and cramped,  
Made fools of, like tamed lions ; whence, on the edge,  
Running 'twixt trunk and trunk to smooth one ledge  
Of shade, were shrubs inserted, warp and woof,  
Which smothered up that variance. Scale the roof  
Of solid tops, and o'er the slope you slide  
Down to a grassy space level and wide,  
Here and there dotted with a tree, but trees  
Of rarer leaf, each foreigner at ease,  
Set by itself : and in the centre spreads,  
Born upon three uneasy leopards' heads,  
A laver, broad and shallow, one bright spirit  
Of water bubbles in. The walls begirt  
With trees leave off on either hand ; pursue  
Your path along a wondrous avenue  
Those walls abut on, heaped of gleamy stone,  
With aloes leering everywhere, gray-grown  
From many a Moorish summer : how they wind  
Out of the fissures ! likelier to bind  
The building than those rusted cramps which drop  
Already in the eating sunshine. Stop,

You fleeting shapes above there ! Ah, the pride  
Or else despair of the whole country-side —  
A range of statues, swarming o'er with wasps,  
God, goddess, woman, man, the Greek rough-rasps  
In crumbling Naples marble ! meant to look  
Like those Messina marbles Constance took  
Delight in, or Taurello's self conveyed  
To Mantua for his mistress, Adelaide,  
A certain font with caryatides  
Since cloistered at Goito ; only, these  
Are up and doing, not abashed, a troop  
Able to right themselves — who see you, stoop  
O' the instant after you their arms ! Unplucked  
By this or that, you pass, for they conduct  
To terrace raised on terrace, and, between,  
Creatures of brighter mould and braver mien  
Than any yet, the choicest of the Isle  
No doubt. Here, left a sullen breathing-while,  
Up-gathered on himself the Fighter stood  
For his last fight, and, wiping treacherous blood  
Out of the eyelids just held ope beneath  
Those shading fingers in their iron sheath,  
Steadied his strengths amid the buzz and stir  
Of the dusk hideous amphitheatre  
At the announcement of his over-match  
To wind the day's diversion up, despatch  
The pertinacious Gaul : while, limbs one heap,  
The Slave, no breath in her round mouth, watched leap  
Dart after dart forth, as her hero's car

Clove dizzily the solid of the war  
 — Let coil about his knees for pride in him.  
 We reach the farthest terrace, and the grim  
 San Pietro Palace stops us.

Such the state

Of Salinguerra's plan to emulate  
 Sicilian marvels, that his girlish wife  
 Retrude still might lead her ancient life  
 In her new home — whereat enlarged so much  
 Neighbors upon the novel princely touch  
 He took, — who here imprisons Boniface.  
 Here must the Envoys come to sue for grace ;  
 And here, emerging from the labyrinth  
 Below, Sordello paused beside the plinth  
 Of the door-pillar.

He had really left.

Verona for the cornfields (a poor theft  
 From the morass) where Este's camp was made ;  
 The Envoys' march, the Legate's cavalcade —  
 All had been seen by him, but scarce as when,  
 Eager for cause to stand aloof from men  
 At every point save the fantastic tie  
 Acknowledged in his boyish sophistry,  
 He made account of such. A crowd, — he meant  
 To task the whole of it ; each part's intent  
 Concerned him therefore : and, the more he pried,  
 The less became Sordello satisfied  
 With his own figure at the moment. Sought  
 He respite from his task ? despaired he aught

Novel in the anticipated sight  
Of all these livers upon all delight ?  
This phalanx, as of myriad points combined,  
Whereby he still had imaged that mankind  
His youth was passed in dreams of rivalling,  
His age — in plans to prove at least such thing  
Had been so dreamed, — which now he must impress  
With his own will, effect a happiness  
By theirs, — supply a body to his soul  
Thence, and become eventually whole  
With them as he had hoped to be without —  
Made these the mankind he once raved about ?  
Because a few of them were notable,  
Should all be figured worthy note ? As well  
Expect to find Taurello's triple line  
Of trees a single and prodigious pine.  
Real pines rose here and there ; but, close among,  
Thrust into and mixed up with pines, a throng  
Of shrubs, he saw, — a nameless common sort  
O'erpast in dreams, left out of the report  
And hurried into corners, or at best  
Admitted to be fancied like the rest.  
Reckon that morning's proper chiefs — how few !  
And yet the people grew, the people grew,  
Grew ever, as if the many there indeed,  
More left behind and most who should succeed, —  
Simply in virtue of their mouths and eyes,  
Petty enjoyments and huge miseries, —  
Mingled with, and made veritably great

Those chiefs : he overlooked not Mainard's state  
Nor Concorezzi's station, but instead  
Of stopping there, each dwindled to be head  
Of infinite and absent Tyrolese  
Or Paduans ; startling all the more, that these  
Seemed passive and disposed of, uncared for,  
" Yet doubtless on the whole " (quoth Eglamor)  
" Smiling — for if a wealthy man decays  
And out of store of robes must wear, all days,  
One tattered suit, alike in sun and shade,  
'T is commonly some tarnished gay brocade  
Fit for a feast-night's flourish and no more :  
Nor otherwise poor Misery from her store  
Of looks is fain to upgather, keep unfurled  
For common wear as she goes through the world,  
The faint remainder of some worn-out smile  
Meant for a feast-night's service merely." While  
Crowd upon crowd rose on Sordello thus, —  
(Crowds no way interfering to discuss,  
Much less dispute, life's joys with one employed  
In envying them, — or, if they aught enjoyed,  
Where lingered something indefinable  
In every look and tone, the mirth as well  
As woe, that fixed at once his estimate  
Of the result, their good or bad estate) —  
Old memories returned with new effect :  
And the new body, ere he could suspect,  
Cohered, mankind and he were really fused,  
The new self seemed impatient to be used

By him, but utterly another way  
To that anticipated: strange to say,  
They were too much below him, more in thrall  
Than he, the adjunct than the principal.  
What booted scattered units? — here a mind  
And there, which might repay his own to find,  
And stamp, and use? — a few, howe'er august,  
If all the rest were grovelling in the dust?  
No: first a mighty equilibrium, sure,  
Should he establish, privilege procure  
For all, the few had long possessed! he felt  
An error, an exceeding error melt —  
While he was occupied with Mantuan chants,  
Behooved him think of men, and take their wants,  
Such as he now distinguished every side,  
As his own want which might be satisfied, —  
And, after that, think of rare qualities  
Of his own soul demanding exercise.  
It followed naturally, through no claim  
On their part, which made virtue of the aim  
At serving them, on his, — that, past retrieve,  
He felt now in their toils, theirs — nor could leave  
Wonder how, in the eagerness to rule,  
Impress his will on mankind, he (the fool!)  
Had never even entertained the thought  
That this his last arrangement might be fraught  
With incidental good to them as well,  
And that mankind's delight would help to swell  
His own. So, if he sighed, as formerly

Because the merry time of life must fleet,  
'T was deeper now,— for could the crowds repeat  
Their poor experiences? His hand that shook  
Was twice to be deplored. . “ The Legate, look !  
With eyes, like fresh-blown thrush-eggs on a thread,  
Faint-blue and loosely floating in his head,  
Large tongue, moist open mouth ; and this long while  
That owner of the idiotic smile  
Serves them ! ” He fortunately saw in time  
His fault however, and since the office prime  
Includes the secondary — best accept  
Both offices ; Taurello, its adept,  
Could teach him the preparatory one,  
And how to do what he had fancied done  
Long previously, ere take the greater task.  
How render first these people happy ? ask  
The people's friends : for there must be one good,  
One way to it — the Cause ! — he understood  
The meaning now of Palma ; why the jar  
Else, the ado, the trouble wide and far  
Of Guelfs and Ghibellins, the Lombard's hope  
And Rome's despair ? — 'twixt Emperor and Pope  
The confused shifting sort of Eden tale —  
Still hardihood recurring, still to fail —  
That foreign interloping fiend, this free  
And native overbrooding deity —  
Yet a dire fascination o'er the palms  
The Kaiser ruined, troubling even the calms  
Of Paradise — or, on the other hand,

The Pontiff, as the Kaisers understand,  
One snake-like cursed of God to love the ground,  
Whose heavy length breaks in the noon profound  
Some saving tree — which needs the Kaiser, drest  
As the dislodging angel of that pest,  
Then — yet that pest bedropt, flat head, full fold,  
With coruscating dower of dyes. “Behold  
The secret, so to speak, and master-spring  
Of the contest! which of the two Powers shall bring  
Men good — perchance the most good — ay, it may  
Be that! the question, which best knows the way.”

And hereupon Count Mainard strutted past  
Out of San Pietro; never seemed the last  
Of archers, slingers: and our friend began  
To recollect strange modes of serving man —  
Arbalist, catapult, brake, manganel,  
And more. “This way of theirs may, — who can tell? —  
Need perfecting,” said he: “let all be solved  
At once! Taurello ’t is, the task devolved  
On late — confront Taurello!”

And at last

He did confront him. Scarcely an hour past  
When forth Sordello came, older by years  
Than at his entry. Unexampled fears  
Oppressed him, and he staggered off, blind, mute  
And deaf, like some fresh-mutilated brute,  
Into Ferrara — not the empty town  
That morning witnessed: he went up and down  
Streets whence the veil had been stripped shred by shred,

So that, in place of huddling with their dead  
Indoors, to answer Salinguerra's ends,  
Its folk made shift to crawl forth, sit like friends  
With any one. A woman gave him choice  
Of her two daughters, the infantile voice  
Or the dimpled knee, for half a chain, his throat  
Was clasped with; but an archer knew the coat —  
Its blue cross and eight lilies, — bade beware  
One dogging him in concert with the pair  
Though thrumming on the sleeve that hid his knife.  
Night set in early, autumn dews were rife,  
They kindled great fires while the Leaguer's mass  
Began at every carroch — he must pass  
Between the kneeling people. Presently  
The carroch of Verona caught his eye  
With purple trappings; silently he bent  
Over its fire, when voices violent  
Began, "Affirm not whom the youth was like  
That, striking from the porch, I did not strike  
Again; I too have chestnut hair; my kin  
Hate Azzo and stand up for Ecelin.  
Here, minstrel, drive bad thoughts away! sing! take  
My glove for guerdon!" and for that man's sake  
He turned: "A song of Eglamor's!" — scarce named,  
When, "Our Sordello's, rather!" all exclaimed;  
"Is not Sordello famousst for rhyme?"  
He had been happy to deny, this time, —  
Profess as heretofore the aching head  
And failing heart, — suspect that in his stead

Some true Apollo had the charge of them,  
Was champion to reward or to condemn,  
So his intolerable risk might shift  
Or share itself ; but Naddo's precious gift  
Of gifts, he owned, be certain ! At the close —  
“I made that,” said he to a youth who rose  
As if to hear : 't was Palma through the band  
Conducted him in silence by her hand.

Back now for Salinguerra. Tito of Trent  
Gave place to Palma and her friend ; who went  
In turn at Montelungo's visit — one  
After the other were they come and gone, —  
These spokesmen for the Kaiser and the Pope,  
This incarnation of the People's hope, —  
Sordello, — all the say of each was said,  
And Salinguerra sat, himself instead  
Of these to talk with, lingered musing yet.  
'T was a drear vast presence-chamber roughly set  
In order for the morning's use ; full face,  
The Kaiser's ominous sign-mark had first place,  
The crowned grim twy-necked eagle, coarsely blacked  
With ochre on the naked wall ; nor lacked  
Romano's green and yellow either side ;  
But the new token Tito brought had tried  
The Legate's patience — nay, if Palma knew  
What Salinguerra almost meant to do  
Until the sight of her restored his lip  
A certain half-smile, three months' chieftainship  
Had banished ! Afterward, the Legate found

No change in him, nor asked what badge he wound  
And unwound carelessly. Now sat the Chief  
Silent as when our couple left, whose brief  
Encounter wrought so opportune effect  
In thoughts he summoned not, nor would reject.  
Though time 't was now if ever, to pause — fix  
On any sort of ending: wiles and tricks  
Exhausted, judge! his charge, the crazy town,  
Just managed to be hindered crashing down —  
His last sound troops ranged — care observed to post  
His best of the maimed soldiers innermost —  
So much was plain enough, but somehow struck  
Him not before. And now with this strange luck  
Of Tito's news, rewarding his address  
So well, what thought he of? — how the success  
With Friedrich's rescript there, would either hush  
Old Ecelin's scruples, bring the manly flush  
To his young son's white cheek, or, last, exempt  
Himself from telling what there was to tempt?  
No: that this minstrel was Romano's last  
Servant — himself the first! Could he contrast  
The whole! that minstrel's thirty years just spent  
In doing naught, their noblest event  
This morning's journey hither, as I told —  
Who yet was lean, outworn and really old,  
A stammering awkward man that scarce dared raise  
His eye before the magisterial gaze —  
And Salinguerra with his fears and hopes  
Of sixty years, his Emperors and Popes,

Cares and contrivances, yet, you would say,  
'T was a youth nonchalantly looked away  
Through the embrasure northward o'er the sick  
Expostulating trees — so agile, quick  
And graceful turned the head on the broad chest  
Encased in pliant steel, his constant vest.  
Whence split the sun off in a spray of fire  
Across the room ; and, loosened of its tire  
Of steel, that head let breathe the comely brown  
Large massive locks discolored as if a crown  
Encircled them, so frayed the basnet where  
A sharp white line divided clean the hair ;  
Glossy above, glossy below, it swept  
Curling and fine about a brow thus kept  
Calm, laid coat upon coat, marble and sound :  
This was the mystic mark the Tuscan found,  
Mused of, turned over books about. Square-faced,  
No lion more ; two vivid eyes, encased  
In hollows filled with many a shade and streak  
Settling from the bold nose and bearded cheek ;  
Nor might the half-smile reach them that deformed  
A lip supremely perfect else — unwarmed,  
Unwidened, less or more ; indifferent  
Whether on trees or men his thoughts were bent,  
Thoughts rarely, after all, in trim and train  
As now a period was fulfilled again ;  
Of such, a series made his life, compressed  
In each, one story serving for the rest —  
How his life-streams rolling arrived at last

At the barrier, whence, were it once overpast,  
They would emerge, a river to the end,—  
Gathered themselves up, paused, bade fate befriend,  
Took the leap, hung a minute at the height,  
Then fell back to oblivion infinite :  
Therefore he smiled. Beyond stretched garden-grounds  
Where late the adversary, breaking bounds,  
Had gained him an occasion, That above,  
That eagle, testified he could improve  
Effectually. The Kaiser's symbol lay  
Beside his rescript, a new badge by way  
Of baldric ; while,— another thing that marred  
Alike emprise, achievement and reward,—  
Ecelin's missive was conspicuous too.

What past life did those flying thoughts pursue ?  
As his, few names in Mantua half so old ;  
But at Ferrara, where his sires enrolled  
It latterly, the Adelardi spared  
No pains to rival them : both factions shared  
Ferrara, so that, counted out, 't would yield  
A product very like the city's shield,  
Half black and white, or Ghibellin and Guelf,  
As after Salinguerra styled himself  
And Este who, till Marchesalla died,  
(Last of the Adelardi) — never tried  
His fortune there : with Marchesalla's child  
Would pass,— could Blacks and Whites be reconciled  
And young Taurello wed Linguetta,— wealth  
And sway to a sole grasp. Each treats by stealth

Already: when the Guelfs, the Ravennese  
Arrive, assault the Pietro quarter, seize  
Linguetta, and are gone! Men's first dismay  
Abated somewhat, hurries down, to lay  
The after indignation, Boniface,  
This Richard's father. "Learn the full disgrace  
Averted, ere you blame us Guelfs, who rate  
Your Salinguerra, your sole potentate  
That might have been, 'mongst Este's valvassors—  
Ay, Azzo's— who, not privy to, abhors  
Our step—but we were zealous." Azzo's then  
To do with! Straight a meeting of old men:  
"Old Salinguerra dead, his heir a boy,  
What if we change our ruler and decoy  
The Lombard Eagle of the azure sphere,  
With Italy to build in, fix him here,  
Settle the city's troubles in a trice?  
For private wrong, let public good suffice!" ✓  
In fine, young Salinguerra's stanchest friends  
Talked of the townsmen making him amends,  
Gave him a goshawk, and affirmed there was  
Rare sport, one morning, over the green grass  
A mile or so. He sauntered through the plain,  
Was restless, fell to thinking, turned again  
In time for Azzo's entry with the bride;  
Count Boniface rode smirking at their side:  
"She brings him half Ferrara," whispers flew,  
"And all Ancona! If the stripling knew!"  
Anon the stripling was in Sicily

Where Heinrich ruled in right of Constance ; he  
Was gracious nor his guest incapable ;  
Each understood the other. So it fell,  
One Spring, when Azzo, thoroughly at ease,  
Had near forgotten by what precise degrees  
He crept at first to such a downy seat,  
The Count trudged over in a special heat  
To bid him of God's love dislodge from each  
Of Salinguerra's palaces,—a breach  
Might yawn else, not so readily to shut,  
For who was just arrived at Mantua but  
The youngster, sword on thigh, and tuft on chin,  
With tokens for Celano, Ecelin,  
Pistore and the like ! Next news,—no whit  
Do any of Ferrara's domes befit  
His wife of Heinrich's very blood : a band  
Of foreigners assemble, understand  
Garden-constructing, level and surround,  
Build up and bury in. A last news crowned  
The consternation : since his infant's birth,  
He only waits they end his wondrous girth  
Of trees that link San Pietro with Tomà,  
To visit Mantua. When the Podestà  
Ecelin, at Vicenza, called his friend  
Taurello thither, what could be their end  
But to restore the Ghibellins' late Head,  
The Kaiser helping ? He with most to dread  
From vengeance and reprisal, Azzo, there  
With Boniface beforehand, as aware

Of plots in progress, gave alarm, expelled  
Both plotters: but the Guelfs in triumph yelled  
Too hastily. The burning and the flight,  
And how Taurello, occupied that night  
With Ecelin, lost wife and son, I told:  
— Not how he bore the blow, retained his hold,  
Got friends safe through, left enemies the worst  
O' the fray, and hardly seemed to care at first—  
But afterward men heard not constantly  
Of Salinguerra's House so sure to be!  
Though Azzo simply gained by the event  
A shifting of his plagues — the first, content  
To fall behind the second and estrange  
So far his nature, suffer such a change  
That in Romano sought he wife and child,  
And for Romano's sake seemed reconciled  
To losing individual life, which shrunk  
As the other prospered — mortised in his trunk;  
Like a dwarf palm which wanton Arabs foil  
Of bearing its own proper wine and oil,  
By grafting into it the stranger-vine,  
Which sucks its heart out, sly and serpentine,  
Till forth one vine-palm feathers to the root,  
And red drops moisten the insipid fruit.  
Once Adelaide set on, — the subtle mate  
Of the weak soldier, urged to emulate  
The Church's valiant women deed for deed,  
And paragon her namesake, win the meed  
Of the great Matilda, — soon they overbore

The rest of Lombardy, — not as before  
By an instinctive truculence, but patched  
The Kaiser's strategy until it matched  
The Pontiff's, sought old ends by novel means.  
“ Only, why is it Salinguerra screens  
Himself behind Romano? — him we bade  
Enjoy our shine i' the front, not seek the shade ! ”  
— Asked Heinrich, somewhat of the tardiest  
To comprehend. Nor Philip acquiesced  
At once in the arrangement; reasoned, plied  
His friend with offers of another bride,  
A statelier function — fruitlessly: 't was plain  
Taurello through some weakness must remain  
Obscure. And Otho, free to judge of both,  
— Ecelin the unready, harsh and loath,  
And this more plausible and facile wight  
With every point a-sparkle — chose the right,  
Admiring how his predecessors harped  
On the wrong man: “ thus,” quoth he, “ wits are  
warped  
By outsides ! ” Carelessly, meanwhile, his life  
Suffered its many turns of peace and strife  
In many lands — you hardly could surprise  
The man; — who shamed Sordello (recognize ! )  
In this as much beside, that, unconcerned  
What qualities were natural or earned,  
With no ideal of graces, as they came  
He took them, singularly well the same —  
Speaking the Greek's own language, just because

Your Greek eludes you, leave the least of flaws  
In contracts with him ; while, since Arab lore  
Holds the stars' secret — take one trouble more  
And master it ! 'T is done, and now deter  
Who may the Tuscan, once Jove trined for her,  
From Friedrich's path ! — Friedrich, whose pilgrimage  
The same man puts aside, whom he 'll engage  
To leave next year John Brienne in the lurch,  
Come to Bassano, see Saint Francis' church  
And judge of Guido the Bolognian's piece  
Which, lend Taurello credit, rivals Greece —  
Angels, with aureoles like golden quoits  
Pitched home, applauding Ecelin's exploits.  
For elegance, he strung the angelot,  
Made rhymes thereto ; for prowess, clove he not  
Tiso, last siege, from crest to crupper ? Why  
Detail you thus a varied mastery  
But to show how Taurello, on the watch  
For men, to read their hearts and thereby catch  
Their capabilities and purposes,  
Displayed himself so far as displayed these :  
While our Sordello only cared to know  
About men as a means whereby he 'd show  
Himself, and men had much or little worth  
According as they kept in or drew forth  
That self ; Taurello's choicest instruments  
Surmised him shallow.

Meantime, malecontents  
Dropped off, town after town grew wiser. "How

Change the world's face?" asked people; "as 't is now  
It has been, will be ever: very fine  
Subjecting things profane to things divine,  
In talk! this contumacy will fatigue  
The vigilance of Este and the League!  
The Ghibellins gain on us!" — as it happed.  
Old Azzo and old Boniface, entrapped  
By Ponte Alto, both in one month's space  
Slept at Verona: either left a brace  
Of sons — but, three years after, either's pair  
Lost Guglielm and Aldobrand its heir:  
Azzo remained and Richard — all the stay  
Of Este and Saint Boniface, at bay  
As 't were. Then, either Ecelin grew old  
Or his brain altered — not of the proper mould  
For new appliances — his old palm-stock  
Endured no influx of strange strengths. He 'd rock  
As in a drunkenness, or chuckle low  
As proud of the completeness of his woe,  
Then weep real tears; — now make some mad onslaught  
On Este, heedless of the lesson taught  
So painfully, — now cringe for peace, sue peace  
At price of past gain, — much more, fresh increase  
To the fortunes of Romano. Up at last  
Rose Este, down Romano sank as fast.  
And men remarked these freaks of peace and war  
Happened while Salinguerra was afar:  
Whence every friend besought him, all in vain,  
To use his old adherent's wits again.

Not he! — “ who had advisers in his sons,  
Could plot himself, nor needed any one’s  
Advice.” ’T was Adelaide’s remaining stanch  
Prevented his destruction root and branch  
Forthwith ; but when she died, doom fell, for gay  
He made alliances, gave lands away  
To whom it pleased accept them, and withdrew  
Forever from the world. Taurello, who  
Was summoned to the convent, then refused  
A word at the wicket, patience thus abused,  
Promptly threw off alike his imbecile  
Ally’s yoke, and his own frank, foolish smile.  
Soon a few movements of the happier sort  
Changed matters, put himself in men’s report  
As heretofore ; he had to fight, beside,  
And that became him ever. So, in pride  
And flushing of this kind of second youth,  
He dealt a good-will blow. Este in truth  
Lay prone — and men remembered, somewhat late,  
A laughing old outrageous stifled hate  
He bore to Este — how it would outbreak  
At times spite of disguise, like an earthquake  
In sunny weather — as that noted day  
When with his hundred friends he tried to slay  
Azzo before the Kaiser’s face : and how,  
On Azzo’s calm refusal to allow  
A liegeman’s challenge, straight he too was calmed :  
As if his hate could bear to lie embalmed,  
Bricked up, the moody Pharaoh, and survive

All intermediate crumblings, and arrive  
At earth's catastrophe — 't was Este's crash  
Not Azzo's he demanded, so, no rash  
Procedure ! Este's true antagonist  
Rose out of Ecelin : all voices whist,  
All eyes were sharpened, wits predicted. He  
'T was, leaned in the embrasure absently,  
Amused with his own efforts, now, to trace  
With his steel-sheathed forefinger Friedrich's face  
I' the dust: but as the trees waved sere, his smile  
Deepened, and words expressed its thought erewhile.

“ Ay, fairly housed at last, my old compeer ?  
That we should stick together, all the year,  
I kept Verona ! — How old Boniface,  
Old Azzo caught us in its market-place,  
He by that pillar, I at this, — caught each  
In mid swing, more than fury of his speech,  
Egging the rabble on to disavow  
Allegiance to their Marquis — Bacchus, how  
They boasted ! Ecelin must turn their drudge,  
Nor, if released, will Salinguerra grudge  
Paying arrears of tribute due long since —  
Bacchus ! My man, could promise then, nor wince,  
The bones-and-muscles ! sound of wind and limb,  
Spoke he the set excuse I framed for him :  
And now he sits me, slavering and mute,  
Intent on chafing each starved purple foot  
Benumbed past aching with the altar slab —  
Will no vein throb there when some monk shall blab

Spitefully to the circle of bald scalps,  
'Friedrich 's affirmed to be our side the Alps'  
— Eh, brother Lactance, brother Anaclet?  
Sworn to abjure the world, its fume and fret,  
God's own now? Drop the dormitory bar,  
Enfold the scanty gray serge scapular  
Twice o'er the cowl to muffle memories out—  
So! but the midnight whisper turns a shout,  
Eyes wink, mouths open, pulses circulate  
In the stone walls: the Past, the world you hate  
Is with you, ambush, open field — or see  
The surging flame — we fire Vicenza — glee!  
Follow, let Pilio and Bernardo chafe—  
Bring up the Mantuans — through San Biagio — safe!  
Ah, the mad people waken? Ah, they writhe  
And reach us? if they block the gate — no tithe  
Can pass — keep back, you Bassanese! the edge,  
Use the edge — shear, thrust, hew, melt down the  
wedge,  
Let out the black of those black upturned eyes!  
Hell — are they sprinkling fire too? the blood fries  
And hisses on your brass gloves as they tear  
Those upturned faces choking with despair.  
Brave! Slidder through the reeking gate — 'how now?  
You six had charge of her?' And then the vow  
Comes, and the foam spirits, hair 's plucked, till one  
shriek  
(I hear it) and you fling — you cannot speak —  
Your gold-flowered basnet to a man who haled

The Adelaide he dared scarce view unveiled  
 This morn, naked across the fire: how crown  
 The archer that exhausted lays you down  
 Your infant, smiling at the flame, and dies?  
 While one, while mine . . .

Bacchus! I think there lies  
 More than one corpse there" (and he paced the room)  
 "—Another cinder somewhere—'t was my doom  
 Beside, my doom! If Adelaide is dead  
 I am the same, this Azzo lives instead  
 Of that to me, and we pull, any how,  
 Este into a heap — the matter's now  
 At the true juncture slipping us so oft.  
 Ay, Heinrich died and Otho, please you, doffed  
 His crown at such a juncture! still, if hold  
 Our Friedrich's purpose, if this chain enfold  
 The neck of . . . who but this same Ecelin  
 That must recoil when the best days begin!  
 Recoil? that's naught; if the recoiler leaves  
 His name for me to fight with, no one grieves!  
 But he must interfere, forsooth, unlock  
 His cloister to become my stumbling-block  
 Just as of old! Ay, ay, there 't is again —  
 The land's inevitable Head — explain  
 The reverences that subject us! Count  
 These Ecelins now! not to say as fount,  
 Originating power of thought, — from twelve  
 That drop i' the trenches they joined hands to delve,  
 Six shall surpass him, but . . . why, men must twine

Somehow with something! *Ecelin* 's a fine  
Clear name! 'T were simpler, doubtless, twine with me  
At once: our cloistered friend's capacity  
Was of a sort! I had to share myself  
In fifty portions, like an o'ertasked elf  
That 's forced illume in fifty points the vast  
Rare vapor he 's environed by. At last  
My strengths, though sorely frittered, e'en converge  
And crown . . . no, Bacchus, they have yet to urge  
The man be crowned!

That aloe, an he durst,  
Would climb! just such a bloated sprawler first  
I noted in Messina's castle-court  
The day I came, when Heinrich asked in sport  
If I would pledge my faith to win him back  
His right in Lombardy: 'for, once bid pack  
Marauders,' he continued, 'in my stead  
You rule, Taurello!' and upon this head  
Laid the silk glove of Constance — I see her  
Too, mantled head to foot in miniver,  
Retrude following!

I am absolved

From further toil: the empery devolved  
On me, 't was Tito's word: I have to lay  
For once my plan, pursue my plan my way,  
Prompt nobody, and render an account  
Taurello to Taurello! nay, I mount  
To Friedrich — he conceives the post I kept,  
Who did true service, able or inept,

Who's worthy guerdon, Ecelin or I.  
Me guerdoned, counsel follows; would he vie  
With the Pope really? Azzo, Boniface  
Compose a right-arm Hohenstauffen's race  
Must break ere govern Lombardy. I point  
How easy 't were to twist, once out of joint,  
The socket from the bone: — my Azzo's stare  
Meanwhile! for I, this idle strap to wear,  
Shall — fret myself abundantly, what end  
To serve? There's left me twenty years to spend  
— How better than my old way? Had I one  
Who labored overthrow my work — a son  
Hatching with Azzo superb treachery,  
To root my pines up and then poison me,  
Suppose — 't were worth while frustrate that! Beside,  
Another life's ordained me: the world's tide  
Rolls, and what hope of parting from the press  
Of waves, a single wave through weariness  
Gently lifted aside, laid upon shore?  
My life must be lived out in foam and roar,  
No question. Fifty years the province held  
Taurello; troubles raised, and troubles quelled,  
He in the midst — who leaves this quaint stone place,  
These trees a year or two, then, not a trace  
Of him! How obtain hold, fetter men's tongues  
Like this poor minstrel with the foolish songs —  
To which, despite our bustle, he is linked?  
— Flowers one may tease, that never grow extinct.  
Ay, that patch, surely, green as ever, where

I set Her Moorish lentisk, by the stair,  
To overawe the aloes ; and we trod  
Those flowers, how call you such ? — into the sod ;  
A stately foreigner — a world of pain  
To make it thrive, arrest rough winds — all vain !  
It would decline ; these would not be destroyed :  
And now, where is it ? where can you avoid  
The flowers ? I frighten children twenty years  
Longer ! — which way, too, Ecelin appears  
To thwart me, for his son's besotted youth  
Gives promise of the proper tiger-tooth :  
They feel it at Vicenza ! Fate, fate, fate,  
My fine Taurello ! go you, promulgate  
Friedrich's decree, and here's shall aggrandize  
Young Ecelin — your Prefect's badge ! a prize  
Too precious, certainly.

How now ? Compete  
With my old comrade ? shuffle from their seat  
His children ? Paltry dealing ! Don't I know  
Ecelin ? now, I think, and years ago !  
What's changed — the weakness ? did not I compound  
For that, and undertake to keep him sound  
Despite it ? Here's Taurello hankering  
After a boy's preferment — this plaything  
To carry, Bacchus ! ” And he laughed.

Remark

Why schemes wherein cold-blooded men embark  
Prosper, when your enthusiastic sort  
Fail : while these last are ever stopping short —

(So much they should — so little they can do !)  
The careless tribe see nothing to pursue  
If they desist ; meantime their scheme succeeds.

Thoughts were caprices in the course of deeds  
Methodic with Taurello ; so, he turned,  
Enough amused by fancies fairly earned  
Of Este's horror-struck submitted neck,  
And Richard, the cowed braggart, at his beck, —  
To his own petty but immediate doubt  
If he could pacify the League without  
Conceding Richard ; just to this was brought  
That interval of vain discursive thought !  
As, shall I say, some Ethiop, past pursuit  
Of all enslavers, dips a shackled foot  
Burnt to the blood, into the drowsy black  
Enormous watercourse which guides him back  
To his own tribe again, where he is king ;  
And laughs because he guesses, numbering  
The yellower poison-wattles on the pouch  
Of the first lizard wrested from its couch  
Under the slime (whose skin, the while, he strips  
To cure his nostril with, and festered lips,  
And eyeballs bloodshot through the desert blast)  
That he has reached its boundary, at last  
May breathe ; — thinks o'er enchantments of the South  
Sovereign to plague his enemies, their mouth,  
Eyes, nails, and hair ; but, these enchantments tried  
In fancy, puts them soberly aside  
For truth, projects a cool return with friends,

The likelihood of winning mere amends  
Erelong ; thinks that, takes comfort silently,  
Then, from the river's brink, his wrongs and he,  
Hugging revenge close to their hearts, are soon  
Off-striding for the Mountains of the Moon.

Midnight : the watcher nodded on his spear,  
Since clouds dispersing left a passage clear,  
For any meagre and discolored moon  
To venture forth ; and such was peering soon  
Above the harassed city — her close lanes  
Closer, not half so tapering her fanes,  
As though she shrunk into herself to keep  
What little life was saved, more safely. Heap  
By heap the watch-fires mouldered, and beside  
The blackest spoke Sordello and replied  
Palma with none to listen. “ 'T is your Cause :  
What makes a Ghibellin ? There should be laws —  
(Remember how my youth escaped ! I trust  
To you for manhood, Palma ; tell me just  
As any child) — there must be laws at work  
Explaining this. Assure me, good may lurk  
Under the bad, — my multitude has part  
In your designs, their welfare is at heart  
With Salinguerra, to their interest  
Refer the deeds he dwelt on, — so divest  
Our conference of much that scared me. Why  
Affect that heartless tone to Tito ? I  
Esteemed myself, yes, in my inmost mind  
This morn, a recreant to my race — mankind

O'erlooked till now: why boast my spirit's force,  
 — Such force denied its object? why divorce  
 These, then admire my spirit's flight the same  
 As though it bore up, helped some half-orbed flame  
 Else quenched in the dead void, to living space?  
 — That orb cast off to chaos and disgrace,  
 Why vaunt so much my unincumbered dance,  
 Making a feat's facilities enhance  
 Its marvel? But I front Taurello, one  
 Of happier fate, and all I should have done,  
 He does; the people's good being paramount  
 With him, their progress may perhaps account  
 For his abiding still: whereas you heard  
 The talk with Tito — the excuse preferred  
 For burning those five hostages, — and broached  
 By way of blind, as you and I approached,  
 I do believe."

She spoke: then he, "My thought  
 Plainlier expressed! All to your profit — naught  
 Meantime of these, of conquests to achieve  
 For them, of wretchedness he might relieve  
 While profiting your party. Azzo, too,  
 Supports a cause: what cause? Do Guelfs pursue  
 Their ends by means like yours, or better?"

When  
 The Guelfs were proved alike, men weighed with men,  
 And deed with deed, blaze, blood, with blood and blaze,  
 Morn broke: "Once more, Sordello, meet its gaze  
 Proudly — the people's charge against thee fails

In every point, while either party quails!  
 These are the busy ones — be silent thou!  
 Two parties take the world up, and allow  
 No third, yet have one principle, subsist  
 By the same injustice; whoso shall enlist  
 With either, ranks with man's inveterate foes.  
 So there is one less quarrel to compose:  
 The Guelf, the Ghibellin may be to curse —  
 I have done nothing, but both sides do worse  
 Than nothing. Nay, to me, forgotten, reft  
 Of insight, lapped by trees and flowers, was left  
 The notion of a service — ha? What lured  
 Me here, what mighty aim was I assured  
 Must move Taurello? What if there remained  
 A Cause, intact, distinct from these, ordained,  
 For me, its true discoverer?"

Some one pressed

Before them here, a watcher, to suggest  
 The subject for a ballad: "They must know  
 The tale of the dead worthy, long ago  
 Consul of Rome — that's long ago for us,  
 Minstrels and bowmen, idly squabbling thus  
 In the world's corner — but too late, no doubt,  
 For the brave time he sought to bring about.  
 — Not know Crescentius Nomentanus?" Then  
 He cast about for terms to tell him, when  
 Sordello disavowed it, how they used  
 Whenever their Superior introduced  
 A novice to the Brotherhood — ("for I

Was just a brown-sleeve brother, merrily  
Appointed too," quoth he, " till Innocent  
Bade me relinquish, to my small content,  
My wife or my brown sleeves") — some brother spoke  
Ere nocturns of Crescentius, to revoke  
The edict issued, after his demise,  
Which blotted fame alike and effigies,  
All out except a floating power, a name  
Including, tending to produce the same  
Great act. Rome, dead, forgotten, lived at least  
Within that brain, though to a vulgar priest  
And a vile stranger, — two not worth a slave  
Of Rome's, Pope John, King Otho, — fortune gave  
The rule there: so, Crescentius, haply drest  
In white, called Roman Consul for a jest,  
Taking the people at their word, forth stept  
As upon Brutus' heel, nor ever kept  
Rome waiting, — stood erect, and from his brain  
Gave Rome out on its ancient place again,  
Ay, bade proceed with Brutus' Rome, kings styled  
Themselves mere citizens of, and, beguiled  
Into great thoughts thereby, would choose the gem  
Out of a lapful, spoil their diadem  
— The Senate's cipher was so hard to scratch!  
He flashes like a phanal, all men catch  
The flame, Rome's just accomplished! when returned  
Otho, with John, the Consul's step had spurned,  
And Hugo Lord of Este, to redress  
The wrongs of each. Crescentius in the stress

Of adverse fortune bent. "They crucified  
 Their Consul in the Forum, and abide  
 E'er since such slaves at Rome, that I — (for I  
 Was once a brown-sleeve brother, merrily  
 Appointed) — I had option to keep wife  
 Or keep brown sleeves, and managed in the strife  
 Lose both. A song of Rome!"

And Rome, indeed,

Robed at Goito in fantastic weed,  
 The Mother-City of his Mantuan days,  
 Looked an established point of light whence rays  
 Traversed the world ; for, all the clustered homes  
 Beside of men, seemed bent on being Romes  
 In their degree ; the question was, how each  
 Should most resemble Rome, clean out of reach.  
 Nor, of the great Two, either principle,  
 Struggled to change — but to possess — Rome, still,  
 Guelf Rome or Ghibellin Rome.

Let Rome advance !

Rome, as she struck Sordello's ignorance —  
 How could he doubt one moment? Rome's the Cause !  
 Rome of the Pandects, all the world's new laws —  
 Of the Capitol, of Castle Angelo ;  
 New structures, that inordinately glow,  
 Subdued, brought back to harmony, made ripe | ✓  
 By many a relic of the archetype  
 Extant for wonder ; every upstart church  
 That hoped to leave old temples in the lurch,  
 Corrected by the Theatre forlorn

That,—as a mundane shell, its world late born,—  
Lay and o'ershadowed it. These hints combined,  
Rome typifies the scheme to put mankind  
Once more in full possession of their rights.

“Let us have Rome again! On me it lights  
To build up Rome—on me, the first and last:  
For such a Future was endured the Past!”

And thus, in the gray twilight, forth he sprung  
To give his thought consistency among  
The very People—let their facts avail  
Finish the dream grown from the archer's tale.

## BOOK THE FIFTH.

### MANKIND TRIUMPH OF A SUDDEN ?

Is it the same Sordello in the dusk  
As at the dawn? — merely a perished husk  
Now, that arose a power fit to build  
Up Rome again? The proud conception chilled  
So soon? Ay, watch that latest dream of thine  
— A Rome indebted to no Palatine,  
Drop arch by arch, Sordello! Art possest  
Of thy wish now — rewarded for thy quest  
To-day among Ferrara's squalid sons —  
Are this and this and this the shining ones  
Meet for the Shining City? Sooth to say,  
Your favored tenantry pursue their way  
After a fashion! This companion slips  
On the smooth causey, t' other blinkard trips  
At his mooned sandal. "Leave to lead the brawls  
Here i' the atria?" No, friend! He that sprawls  
On aught but a stibadium . . what his dues  
Who puts the lustral vase to such an use?  
O, huddle up the day's disasters! March,  
Ye runagates, and drop thou, arch by arch,  
Rome!

Yet before they quite disband — a whim —  
Study mere shelter, now, for him, and him,

Nay, even the worst,—just house them! Any cave Suffices: throw out earth! A loophole? Brave! They ask to feel the sun shine, see the grass Grow, hear the larks sing? Dead art thou, alas, And I am dead! But here 's our son excels At hurdle-weaving any Scythian, fells Oak and devises rafters, dreams and shapes His dream into a door-post, just escapes The mystery of hinges. Lie we both Perdue another age. The goodly growth Of brick and stone! Our building-pelt was rough, But that descendant's garb suits well enough A portico-contriver. Speed the years— What 's time to us? at last, a city rears Itself! nay, enter—what 's the grave to us? Lo, our forlorn acquaintance carry thus The head! Successively sewer, forum, cirque— Last age, an aqueduct was counted work, But now they tire the artificer upon Blank alabaster, black obsidian, — Careful, Jove's face be duly fulgurant, And mother Venus' kiss-creased nipples pant Back into pristine pulpiness, ere fixed Above the baths. What difference betwixt This Rome and ours — resemblance what, between That scurvy dumb-show and this pageant sheen— These Romans and our rabble? Use thy wit! The work marched: step by step,— a workman fit Took each, nor too fit,— to one task, one time,—

No leaping o'er the petty to the prime,  
 When just the substituting osier lithé  
 For brittle bulrush, sound wood for soft withe,  
 To further loam-and-roughcast-work a stage, —  
Exacts an architect, exacts an age:  
 No tables of the Mauritanian tree  
 For men whose maple-log's their luxury!  
 That way was Rome built. “Better” (say you)  
 “merge

At once all workmen in the demiurge,  
All epochs in a lifetime, every task  
 In one!” So should the sudden city bask  
 I’ the day — while those we’d feast there, want the knack  
 Of keeping fresh-chalked gowns from speck and brack,  
 Distinguish not rare peacock from vile swan,  
 Nor Mareotic juice from Cœcuban.

“Enough of Rome! ’T was happy to conceive  
 Rome on a sudden, nor shall fate bereave  
 Me of that credit: for the rest, her spite  
 Is an old story — serves my folly right  
 By adding yet another to the dull  
List of abortions — things proved beautiful  
 Could they be done, Sordello cannot do.”

He sat upon the terrace, plucked and threw  
 The powdery aloe-cusps away, saw shift  
 Rome’s walls, and drop arch after arch, and drift  
 Mist-like afar those pillars of all stripe,  
 Mounds of all majesty. “Thou archetype,  
 Last of my dreams and loveliest, depart!”

And then a low voice wound into his heart:  
“Sordello!” (low as some old Pythoness  
Conceding to a Lydian King’s distress  
The cause of his long error — one mistake  
Of her past oracle) “Sordello, wake!  
God has conceded two sights to a man —  
One, of men’s whole work, time’s completed plan,  
The other, of the minute’s work, man’s first  
Step to the plan’s completeness: what’s dispersed  
Save hope of that supreme step which, despaired  
Earliest, was meant still to remain untried  
Only to give you heart to take your own  
Step, and there stay — leaving the rest alone?  
Where is the vanity? Why count as one  
The first step, with the last step? What is gone  
Except Rome’s aëry magnificence,  
That last step you’d take first? — an evidence  
You were God: be man now! Let those glances fall!  
The basis, the beginning step of all,  
Which proves you just a man — is that gone too?  
Pity to disconcert one versed as you  
In fate’s ill-nature! but its full extent  
Eludes Sordello, even: the veil rent,  
Read the black writing — that collective man  
Outstrips the individual! Who began  
The acknowledged greatnesses? Ay, your own art  
Shall serve us: put the poet’s mimes apart —.  
Close with the poet’s self, and lo, a dim  
Yet too plain form divides itself from him!

Alcamo's song enmeshes the lulled Isle,  
Woven into the echoes left erewhile  
By Nina, one soft web of song: no more  
Turning his name, then, flower-like o'er and o'er !  
An elder poet in the younger's place —  
Nina's the strength — but Alcamo's the grace :  
Each neutralizes each then ! Search your fill ;  
You get no whole and perfect Poet — still  
New Ninas, Alcamos, till time's midnight  
Shrouds all — or better say, the shutting light  
Of a forgotten yesterday. Dissect  
Every ideal workman — (to reject  
In favor of your fearful ignorance  
The thousand phantasms eager to advance,  
And point you but to those within your reach) —  
Were you the first who brought — (in modern speech)  
The Multitude to be materialized?  
That loose eternal unrest — who devised  
An apparition i' the midst ? The rout  
Was checked, a breathless ring was formed about  
That sudden flower: get round at any risk  
The gold-rough pointel, silver-blazing disk  
O' the lily ! Swords across it ! Reign thy reign  
And serve thy frolic service, Charlemagne !  
— The very child of over-joyousness,  
Unfeeling thence, strong therefore : Strength by stress  
Of Strength comes of that forehead confident,  
Those widened eyes expecting heart's content,  
A calm as out of just-quelled noise ; nor swerves

For doubt, the ample cheek in gracious curves  
Abutting on the upthrust nether lip :  
He wills, how should he doubt then ? Ages slip :  
Was it Sordello pried into the work  
So far accomplished, and discovered lurk  
A company amid the other clans,  
Only distinct in priests for castellans  
And popes for suzerains (their rule confessed  
Its rule, their interest its interest,  
Living for sake of living — there an end, —  
Wrapt in itself, no energy to spend  
In making adversaries or allies), —  
Dived you into its capabilities  
And dared create, out of that sect, a soul  
Should turn the multitude, already whole,  
Into its body ? Speak plainer ! Is 't so sure  
God's church lives by a King's investiture ?  
Look to last step ! a staggering — a shock —  
What 's mere sand is demolished, while the rock  
Endures : a column of black fiery dust  
Blots heaven — that help was prematurely thrust  
Aside, perchance ! — but the air clears, naught 's erased  
Of the true outline ! Thus much being firm based,  
The other was a scaffold. See him stand  
Buttressed upon his mattock, Hildebrand  
Of the hugh brain-mask welded ply o'er ply  
As in a forge ; it buries either eye  
White and extinct, that stupid brow ; teeth clenched,  
The neck tight-corded, too, the chin deep-trenched,

As if a cloud enveloped him while fought  
Under its shade, grim prizers, thought with thought  
At dead-lock, agonizing he, until  
The victor thought leapt radiant up, and Will,  
The slave with folded arms and drooping lids  
They fought for, lean forth flame-like as it bids.  
Call him no flower — a mandrake of the earth,  
Thwarted and dwarfed and blasted in its birth,  
Rather, a fruit of suffering's excess,  
Thence feeling, therefore stronger: still by stress  
Of Strength, work Knowledge! Full three hundred years  
Have men to wear away in smiles and tears  
Between the two that nearly seem to touch,  
Observe you! quit one workman and you clutch  
Another, letting both their trains go by —  
The actors-out of either's policy,  
Heinrich, on this hand, Otho, Barbaross,  
Carry the three Imperial crowns across,  
Aix' Iron, Milan's Silver, and Rome's Gold —  
While Alexander, Innocent uphold  
On that, each Papal key — but, link on link,  
Why is it neither chain betrays a chink?  
How coalesce the small and great? Alack,  
For one thrust forward, fifty such fall back!  
Do the popes coupled there help Gregory  
Alone? Hark — from the hermit Peter's cry  
At Claremont, down to the first serf that says  
Friedrich's no liege of his while he delays  
Getting the Pope's curse off him! The Crusade —

Or trick of breeding strength by other aid  
Than strength, is safe. Hark — from the wild harangue  
Of Vimmercato, to the carroch's clang  
Yonder! The League — or trick of turning strength  
Against pernicious strength, is safe at length.  
Yet hark — from Mantuan Albert making cease  
The fierce ones, to Saint Francis preaching peace  
Yonder! God's Truce — or trick to supersede  
The very use of strength, is safe. Indeed  
We trench upon the Future! Who is found  
To take next step, next age — trail o'er the ground —  
Shall I say, gourd-like? — not the flower's display  
Nor the root's prowess, but the plenteous way  
O' the plant — produced by joy and sorrow, whence  
Unfeeling and yet feeling, strongest thence?  
Knowledge by stress of merely Knowledge? No —  
E'en were Sordello ready to forego  
His life for this, 't were overleaping work  
Some one has first to do, howe'er it irk,  
Nor stray a foot's breadth from the beaten road.  
Who means to help must still support the load  
Hildebrand lifted — 'why hast Thou,' he groaned,  
'Imposed on me a burden, Paul had moaned,  
And Moses dropped beneath?' Much done — and yet  
Doubtless, that grandest task God ever set  
On man, left much to do: at his arm's wrench,  
Charlemagne's scaffold fell; but pillars blench  
Merely, start back again — perchance have been  
Taken for buttresses: crash every screen,

Hammer the tenons better, and engage  
A gang about your work, for the next age  
Or two, of Knowledge, part by Strength and part  
By Knowledge! Then, indeed, perchance may start  
Sordello on his race — would time divulge  
Such secrets! If one step 's awry, one bulge  
Calls for correction by a step we thought  
Got over long since, why, till that is wrought,  
No progress! and the scaffold in its turn  
Becomes, its service o'er, a thing to spurn.  
Meanwhile, if your half-dozen years of life  
In store, dispose you to forego the strife,  
Who takes exception? Only bear in mind,  
Ferrara 's reached, Goito 's left behind:  
As you then were, as half yourself, desist!  
— The warrior-part of you may, an it list,  
Finding real faulchions difficult to poise,  
Fling them afar and taste the cream of joys  
By wielding such in fancy, — what is bard  
Of you, may spurn the vehicle that marred  
Elys so much, and in free fancy glut  
His sense, yet write no verses — you have but  
To please yourself for law, and once could please  
What once appeared yourself, by dreaming these  
Rather than doing these, in days gone by.  
But all is changed the moment you deserv  
Mankind as half yourself, — then, fancy's trade  
Ends once and always: how may half evade  
The other half? men are found half of you.

Out of a thousand helps, just one or two  
Can be accomplished presently : but flinch  
From these (as from the faulchion, raised an inch,  
Elys, described a couplet) and make proof  
Of fancy,— then, while one half lolls aloof  
I' the vines, completing Rome to the tip-top —  
See if, for that, your other half will stop  
A tear, begin a smile ! The rabble's woes,  
Ludicrous in their patience as they chose  
To sit about their town and quietly  
Be slaughtered,— the poor reckless soldiery,  
With their ignoble rhymes on Richard, how  
'Polt-foot,' sang they, 'was in a pitfall now,'  
Cheering each other from the engine-mounts,—  
That crippled spawling idiot who recounts  
How, lopt of limbs, he lay, stupid as stone,  
Till the pains crept from out him one by one,  
And wriggles round the archers on his head  
To earn a morsel of their chestnut bread,—  
And Cino, always in the selfsame place  
Weeping ; beside that other wretch's case,  
Eyepits to ear, one gangrene since he plied  
The engine in his coat of raw sheep's hide  
A double watch in the noon sun ; and see  
Lucchino, beauty, with the favors free,  
Trim hacqueton, spruce beard and scented hair,  
Campaigning it for the first time — cut there  
In two already, boy enough to crawl  
For latter orpine round the southern wall,

Tomà, where Richard 's kept, because that whore  
Marfisa, the fool never saw before,  
Sickened for flowers this wearisomest siege :  
And Tiso's wife — men liked their pretty liege,  
Cared for her least of whims once, — Berta, wed  
A twelvemonth gone, and, now poor Tiso 's dead,  
Delivering herself of his first child  
On that chance heap of wet filth, reconciled  
To fifty gazers ! ” — (Here a wind below  
Made moody music augural of woe  
From the pine barrier) — “ What if, now the scene  
Draws to a close, yourself have really been  
— You, plucking purples in Goito's moss  
Like edges of a trabea (not to cross  
Your consul-humor) or dry aloe-shafts  
For fasces, at Ferrara — he, fate wafts,  
This very age, her whole inheritance  
Of opportunities ? Yet you advance  
Upon the last ! Since talking is your trade,  
There 's Salinguerra left you to persuade :  
Fail ! then ” —

“ No — no — which latest chance secure ! ”

Leapt up and cried Sordello : “ this made sure,  
The Past were yet redeemable ; its work  
Was — help the Guelfs, whom I, howe'er it irk,  
Thus help ! ” He shook the foolish aloe-haulm  
Out of his doublet, paused, proceeded calm  
To the appointed presence. The large head  
Turned on its socket ; “ And your spokesman,” said

The large voice, "is Elcorte's happy sprout?  
Few such"—(so finishing a speech no doubt  
Addressed to Palma, silent at his side)  
—“My sober councils have diversified.  
Elcorte's son! good: forward as you may,  
Our lady's minstrel with so much to say!”  
The hesitating sunset floated back,  
Rosily traversed in the wonted track  
The chamber, from the lattice o'er the girth  
Of pines, to the huge eagle blacked in earth  
Opposite,—outlined sudden, spur to crest,  
That solid Salinguerra, and caressed  
Palma's contour; 't was Day looped back Night's pall;  
Sordello had a chance left spite of all.

And much he made of the convincing speech  
He meant should compensate the Past and reach  
Through his youth's daybreak of unprofit, quite  
To his noon's labor, so proceed till night  
Leisurely! The great argument to bind  
Taurello with the Guelf Cause, body and mind,  
—Came the consummate rhetoric to that?  
Yet most Sordello's argument dropped flat  
Through his accustomed fault of breaking yoke,  
Disjoining him who felt from him who spoke.  
Was 't not a touching incident—so prompt  
A rendering the world its just accompt,  
Once proved its debtor? Who'd suppose, before  
This proof, that he, Goito's god of yore,  
At duty's instance could demean himself

So memorably, dwindle to a Guelf?  
Be sure, in such delicious flattery steeped,  
His inmost self at the out-portion peeped  
Thus occupied ; then stole a glance at those  
Appealed to, curious if her color rose  
Or his lip moved, while he discreetly urged  
The need of Lombardy's becoming purged  
At soonest of her barons ; the poor part  
Abandoned thus, missing the blood at heart  
And spirit in brain, unseasonably off  
Elsewhere ! But, though his speech was worthy scoff,  
Good-humored Salinguerra, famed for tact  
And tongue, who, careless of his phrase, ne'er lacked  
The right phrase, and harangued Honorius dumb  
At his accession, — looked as all fell plumb  
To purpose and himself found interest  
In every point his new instructor pressed  
— Left playing with the rescript's white wax seal  
To scrutinize Sordello head and heel.  
Then means he yield assent sure ? No, alas !  
All he replied was, “ What, it comes to pass  
That poesy, sooner than politics,  
Makes fade young hair ? ” To think such speech could fix  
Taurello !

Then a flash of bitter truth :

So fantasies could break and fritter youth—  
That he had long ago lost earnestness,  
Lost will to work, lost power to even express  
The need of working ! Earth was turned a grave :

No more occasions now, though he should crave  
Just one, in right of superhuman toil,  
To do what was undone, repair such spoil,  
Alter the Past — nothing would give the chance !  
Not that he was to die : he saw askance  
Protract the ignominious years beyond  
To dream in — time to hope and time despond,  
Remember and forget, be sad, rejoice  
As saved a trouble ; he might, at his choice,  
One way or other, idle life out, drop  
No few smooth verses by the way — for prop,  
A thyrsus, these sad people, all the same,  
Should pick up, and set store by, — far from blame,  
Plant o'er his hearse, convinced his better part  
Survived him. “ Rather tear men out the heart  
Of the truth ! ” — Sordello muttered, and renewed  
His propositions for the Multitude.

But Salinguerra, who at this attack  
Had thrown great breast and ruffling corslet back  
To hear the better, smilingly resumed  
His task ; beneath, the carroch’s warning boomed ;  
He must decide with Tito ; courteously  
He turned then, even seeming to agree  
With his admonisher — “ Assist the Pope,  
Extend Guelf domination, fill the scope  
Of the Church, thus based on All, by All, for All —  
Change Secular to Evangelical ” —  
Echoing his very sentence : all seemed lost,  
When sudden he looked up, laughingly almost,

To Palma: "This opinion of your friend's—  
 For instance, would it answer Palma's ends ?  
 Best, were it not, turn Guelf, submit our Strength"—  
 (Here he drew out his baldric to its length)  
 —"To the Pope's Knowledge — let our captive slip,  
 Wide to the walls throw ope our gates, equip  
 Azzo with . . . what I hold here ? Who 'll subscribe  
 To a trite censure of the minstrel tribe  
 Henceforward ? or pronounce, as Heinrich used,  
 ' Spear-heads for battle, burr-heads for the joust !'  
 — When Constance, for his couplets, would promote  
 Alcamo, from a parti-colored coat,  
 To holding her lord's stirrup in the wars.  
 Not that I see where couplet-making jars | ✓  
 With common sense : at Mantua I had borne  
 This chanted, better than their most forlorn  
 Of bull-baits, — that 's indisputable ! "

Brave !

Whom vanity nigh slew, contempt shall save !  
 All 's at an end : a Troubadour suppose  
Mankind will class him with their friends or foes ?  
 A puny uncouth ailing vassal think  
 The world and him bound in some special link ?  
Abrupt the visionary tether burst —  
 What were rewarded here, or what amerced  
 If a poor drudge, solicitous to dream  
 Deservingly, got tangled by his theme  
 So far as to conceit the knack or gift  
 Or whatsoe'er it be, of verse, might lift

The globe, a lever like the hand and head  
Of—"Men of Action," as the Jongleurs said,  
—"The Great Men," in the people's dialect?

And not a moment did this scorn affect  
Sordello: scorn the poet? They, for once,  
Asking "what was," obtained a full response.  
Bid Naddo think at Mantua, he had but  
To look into his promptuary, put  
Finger on a set thought in a set speech:  
But was Sordello fitted thus for each  
Conjecture? Nowise; since, within his soul,  
Perception brooded unexpressed and whole.  
A healthy spirit like a healthy frame  
Craves aliment in plenty—all the same,  
Changes, assimilates its aliment.  
Perceived Sordello, on a truth intent?  
Next day no formularies more you saw  
Than figs or olives in a sated maw.  
'T is Knowledge, whither such perceptions tend;  
They lose themselves in that, means to an end,  
The many old producing some one new,  
A last unlike the first. If lies are true,  
The Caliph's wheel-work man of brass receives  
A meal, munched millet grains and lettuce leaves  
Together in his stomach rattle loose—  
You find them perfect next day to produce;  
But ne'er expect the man, on strength of that,  
Can roll an iron camel-collar flat  
Like Haroun's self! I tell you, what was stored

Bit by bit through Sordello's life, outpoured  
That eve, was, for that age, a novel thing :  
And round those three the people formed a ring,  
Of visionary judges whose award  
He recognized in full — faces that barred  
Henceforth return to the old careless life,  
In whose great presence, therefore, his first strife  
For their sake must not be ignobly fought.  
All these, for once, approved of him, he thought,  
Suspended their own vengeance, chose await  
The issue of this strife to reinstate  
Them in the right of taking it — in fact  
He must be proved king ere they could exact  
Vengeance for such king's defalcation. Last,  
A reason why the phrases flowed so fast  
Was in his quite forgetting for a time  
Himself in his amazement that the rhyme  
Disguised the royalty so much : he there —  
And Salinguerra — and yet unaware  
Who was the lord, who liegeman !

“ Thus I lay

On thine my spirit and compel obey  
His lord, — my liegeman, — impotent to build  
Another Rome, but hardly so unskilled  
In what such builder should have been, as brook  
One shame beyond the charge that I forsook  
His function ! Free me from that shame, I bend  
A brow before, suppose new years to spend,  
Allow each chance, nor fruitlessly, recur —

Measure thee with the Minstrel, then, demur  
At any crown he claims! That I must cede  
Shamed now, my right to my especial meed —  
Confess thee fitter help the world than I  
Ordained its champion from eternity,  
Is much: but to behold thee scorn the post  
I quit in thy behalf — to hear thee boast  
What makes my own despair!" And while he rung  
The changes on this theme, the roof up-sprung,  
The sad walls of the presence-chamber died  
Into the distance, or embowering vied  
With far-away Goito's vine-frontier;  
And crowds of faces — (only keeping clear  
The rose-light in the midst, his vantage-ground  
To fight their battle from) — deep clustered round  
Sordello, with good wishes no mere breath,  
Kind prayers for him no vapor, since, come death,  
Come life, he was fresh-sinewed every joint,  
Each bone new-marrowed as whom Gods anoint  
Though mortal to their rescue: now let sprawl  
The snaky volumes hither! Is Typhon all  
For Hercules to trample — good report  
From Salinguerra only to extort?  
"So was I" (closed he his inculcating,  
A poet must be earth's essential king) |  
"So was I, royal so, and if I fail,  
'T is not the royalty, ye witness quail,  
But one deposed who, caring not exert  
Its proper essence, trifled malapert

With accidents instead — good things assigned  
As heralds of a better thing behind —  
And, worthy through display of these, put forth  
Never the inmost all-surpassing worth  
That constitutes him King precisely since  
As yet no other spirit may evince  
Its like : the power he took most pride to test,  
Whereby all forms of life had been professed  
At pleasure, forms already on the earth,  
Was but a means to power beyond, whose birth  
Should, in its novelty, be kingship's proof.  
Now, whether he came near or kept aloof  
The several forms he longed to imitate,  
Not there the kingship lay, he sees too late.  
Those forms, unalterable first as last,  
Proved him her copier, not the protoplast  
Of nature : what could come of being free  
By action to exhibit tree for tree,  
Bird, beast, for beast and bird, or prove earth bore  
One veritable man or woman more ?  
Means to an end, such proofs are : what the end ?  
Let essence, whatsoe'er it be, extend —  
Never contract ! Already you include  
The multitude ; then let the multitude  
Include yourself ; and the result were new :  
Themselves before, the multitude turn you.  
This were to live and move and have, in them,  
Your being, and secure a diadem  
You should transmit (because no cycle yearns

Beyond itself, but on itself returns)  
When, the full sphere in wane, the world o'erlaid  
Long since with you, shall have in turn obeyed  
Some orb still prouder, some display, still  
More potent than the last, of human will,  
And some new King depose the old. Of such  
Am I — whom pride of this elates too much?  
Safe, rather say, 'mid troops of peers again;  
I, with my words, hailed brother of the train  
Deeds once sufficed: for, let the world roll back,  
Who fails, through deeds howe'er diverse, re-track  
My purpose still, my task? A teeming crust —  
Air, flame, earth, wave at conflict! Then, needs must  
Emerge some Calm embodied, these refer  
The brawl to; — yellow-bearded Jupiter?  
No! Saturn; some existence like a pact  
And protest against Chaos, some first fact  
I' the faint of time. My deep of life, I know,  
Is unavailing e'en to poorly show" . . .  
(For here the Chief immeasurably yawned)  
.... "Deeds in their due gradation till Song dawned —  
The fullest effluence of the finest mind,  
All in degree, no way diverse in kind  
From minds about it, minds which, more or less  
Lofty or low, move seeking to impress  
Themselves on somewhat; but one mind has climbed  
Step after step, by just ascent sublimed.  
Thought is the soul of act, and, stage by stage,  
Is soul from body still to disengage

As tending to a freedom which rejects  
Such help and incorporeally affects  
The world, producing deeds but not by deeds,  
Swaying, in others, frames itself exceeds,  
Assigning them the simpler tasks it used  
To patiently perform till Song produced  
Acts, by thoughts only, for the mind: divest  
Mind of e'en Thought, and, lo, God's unexpressed  
Will dawns above us! All then is to win  
Save that! How much for me, then? where begin  
My work? About me, faces! and they flock,  
The earnest faces! What shall I unlock  
By song? behold me prompt, whate'er it be,  
To minister: how much can mortals see  
Of Life? No more than so? I take the task  
And marshal you Life's elemental masque,  
Show Men, on evil or on good lay stress,  
This light, this shade make prominent, suppress  
All ordinary hues that softening blend  
Such natures with the level. Apprehend  
Which sinner is, which saint, if I allot  
Hell, Purgatory, Heaven, a blaze or blot,  
To those you doubt concerning! I enwomb  
Some wretched Friedrich with his red-hot tomb;  
Some dubious spirit, Lombard Agilulph  
With the black chastening river I engulf;  
Some unapproached Matilda I enshrine  
With languors of the planet of decline —  
These, fail to recognize, to arbitrate

Between henceforth, to rightly estimate  
Thus marshalled in the masque ! Myself, the while,  
As one of you, am witness, shrink or smile  
At my own showing ! Next age — what 's to do ?  
The men and women stationed hitherto  
Will I unstation, good and bad, conduct  
Each nature to its farthest, or obstruct  
At soonest, in the world : light, thwarted, breaks  
A limpid purity to rainbow flakes,  
Or shadow, massed, freezes to gloom : behold  
How such, with fit assistance to unfold,  
Or obstacles to crush them, disengage  
Their forms, love, hate, hope, fear, peace make, war wage,  
In presence of you all ! Myself, implied  
Superior now, as, by the platform's side,  
I bade them do and suffer, — would last content  
The world . . . no — that 's too far ! I circumvent  
A few, my masque contented, and to these  
Offer unveil the last of mysteries —  
Man's inmost life shall have yet freer play :  
Once more I cast external things away,  
And natures composite, so decompose  
That " . . . Why, he writes *Sordello* !

“ How I rose,

And how have you advanced ! since evermore  
Yourselves effect what I was fain before  
Effect, what I supplied yourselves suggest,  
What I leave bare yourselves can now invest.  
How we attain to talk as brothers talk,

In half-words, call things by half-names, no balk  
From discontinuing old aids. To-day  
Takes in account the work of Yesterday :  
Has not the world a Past now, its adept  
Consults ere he dispense with or accept  
New aids ? a single touch more may enhance,  
A touch less turn to insignificance  
Those structures' symmetry the Past has strewed  
The world with, once so bare. Leave the mere rude  
Explicit details ! 't is but brother's speech  
We need, speech where an accent's change gives each  
The other's soul — no speech to understand  
By former audience : need was then to expand,  
Expatiate — hardly were we brothers ! true —  
Nor I lament my small remove from you,  
Nor reconstruct what stands already. Ends  
Accomplished turn to means : my art intends  
New structure from the ancient : as they changed  
The spoils of every clime at Venice, ranged  
The horned and snouted Libyan god, upright  
As in his desert, by some simple bright  
Clay cinerary pitcher — Thebes as Rome,  
Athens as Byzant rifled, till their Dome  
From earth's reputed consummations razed  
A seal, the all-transmuting Triad blazed  
Above. Ah, whose that fortune ? ne'ertheless  
E'en he must stoop contented to express  
No tithe of what's to say — the vehicle  
Never sufficient : but his work is still

For faces like the faces that select  
The single service I am bound effect,  
And bid me cast aside such fancies, bow  
Taurello to the Guelph cause, disallow  
The Kaiser's coming — which with heart, soul, strength,  
I labor for, this eve, who feel at length  
My past career's outrageous vanity,  
And would, as it amends, die, even die  
Now I first estimate the boon of life,  
If death might win compliance — sure, this strife  
Is right for once — the People my support."

My poor Sordello! what may we extort  
By this, I wonder? Palma's lighted eyes  
Turned to Taurello who, long past surprise,  
Began, " You love him — what you 'd say at large  
Let me say briefly. First, your father's charge  
To me, his friend, peruse: I guessed indeed  
You were no stranger to the course decreed.  
He bids me leave his children to the saints:  
As for a certain project, he acquaints  
The Pope with that, and offers him the best  
Of your possessions to permit the rest  
Go peaceably — to Ecelin, a stripe  
Of soil the cursed Vicentines will gripe,  
— To Alberic, a patch the Trevisan  
Clutches already; extricate, who can,  
Treville, Villarazzi, Puissolo,  
Cartiglione, Loria! — all go,  
And with them go my hopes. 'T is lost, then! Lost

This eve, our crisis, and some pains it cost  
Procuring ; thirty years — as good I 'd spent  
Like our admonisher ! But each his bent  
Pursues : no question, one might live absurd  
One's self this while, by deed as he by word,  
Persisting to obtrude an influence where  
'T is made account of, much as . . . nay, you fare  
With twice the fortune, youngster ! — I submit,  
Happy to parallel my waste of wit  
With the renowned Sordello's : you decide  
A course for me. Romano may abide  
Romano, — Bacchus ! After all, what dearth  
Of Ecelins and Alberics on earth ?  
Say there 's a prize in prospect, must disgrace  
Betide competitors, unless they style  
Themselves Romano ? were it worth my while  
To try my own luck ! But an obscure place  
Suits me — there wants a youth to bustle, stalk  
And attitudinize — some fight, more talk,  
Most flaunting badges — how, I might make clear,  
Since Friedrich's very purposes lie here  
— Here, pity they are like to lie ! For me,  
With station fixed unceremoniously  
Long since, small use contesting ; I am but  
The liegeman, you are born the lieges — shut  
That gentle mouth now ! or resume your kin  
In your sweet self ; were Palma Ecelin  
For me to work with ! Could that neck endure  
This bauble for a cumbrous garniture,

She should . . . or might one bear it for her ? Stay —  
 I have not been so flattered many a day  
 As by your pale friend — Bacchus ! The least help  
 Would lick the hind's fawn to a lion's whelp —  
 His neck is broad enough — a ready tongue  
 Beside — too writhled — but, the main thing, young —  
 I could . . . why, look ye ! ”

And the badge was thrown  
 Across Sordello's neck : “ This badge alone  
 Makes you Romano's Head — becomes superb  
 On your bare neck, which would, on mine, disturb  
 The pauldron,” said Taurello. A mad act,  
 Not even dreamed about before — in fact,  
 Not when his sportive arm rose for the nonce —  
 But he had dallied overmuch, this once,  
 With power : the thing was done, and he, aware  
 The thing was done, proceeded to declare —  
 (So like a nature made to serve, excel  
 In serving, only feel by service well ! )  
 — That he would make Sordello that and more.  
 “ As good a scheme as any ! What 's to pore  
 At in my face ? ” he asked — ponder instead  
 This piece of news ; you are Romano's Head !  
 One cannot slacken pace so near the goal,  
 Suffer my Azzo to escape heart-whole  
 This time ! For you there 's Palma to espouse —  
 For me, one crowning trouble ere I house  
 Like my compeer.”

On which ensued a strange

And solemn visitation ; there came change  
O'er every one of them ; each looked on each :  
Up in the midst a truth grew, without speech.  
And when the giddiness sank and the haze  
Subsided, they were sitting, no amaze,  
Sordello with the baldric on, his sire  
Silent, though his proportions seemed aspire  
Momently ; and, interpreting the thrill  
Nigh at its ebb, Palma was found there still  
Relating somewhat Adelaide confessed  
A year ago, while dying on her breast,—  
Of a contrivance that Vicenza night,  
When Ecelin had birth. “ Their convoy's flight,  
Cut off a moment, coiled inside the flame  
That wallowed like a dragon at his game  
The toppling city through — San Biagio rocks !  
And wounded lies in her delicious locks  
Retrude, the frail mother, on her face,  
None of her wasted, just in one embrace  
Covering her child : when, as they lifted her,  
Cleaving the tumult, mighty, mightier  
And mightiest Taurello's cry outbroke,  
Leapt like a tongue of fire that cleaves the smoke,  
Midmost to cheer his Mantuans onward — drown  
His colleague Ecelin's clamor, up and down  
The disarray : failed Adelaide see then  
Who was the natural chief, the man of men ?  
Outstripping time, her infant there burst swathe,  
Stood up with eyes haggard beyond the scathe

From wandering after his heritage  
Lost once and lost for aye — and why that rage,  
That deprecating glance? A new shape leant  
On a familiar shape — gloatingly bent  
O'er his discomfiture; 'mid wreaths it wore,  
Still one outflamed the rest — her child's before  
'T was Salinguerra's for his child: scorn, hate  
Rage, startled her from Ecelin — too late!  
Then was the moment! rival's foot had spurned  
Never that brow to earth! Ere sense returned —  
The act conceived, adventured, and complete,  
They bore away to an obscure retreat  
Mother and child — Retrude's self not slain"  
(Nor even here Taurello moved) "though pain  
Was fled; and what assured them most 't was fled,  
All pain, was, if they raised the pale hushed head  
'T would turn this way and that, waver awhile,  
And only settle into its old smile —  
(Graceful as the disquieted water-flag  
Steadying itself, remarked they, in the quag  
On either side their path) — when suffered look  
Down on her child. They marched: no sign once shook  
The company's close litter of crossed spears  
Till, as they reached Goito, a few tears  
Slipt in the sunset from her long black lash,  
And she was gone. So far the action rash —  
No crime. They laid Retrude in the font,  
Taurello's very gift, her child was wont  
To sit beneath — constant as eve he came

To sit by its attendant girls the same  
 As one of them. For Palma, she would blend  
 With this magnific spirit to the end,  
 That ruled her first — but scarcely had she dared  
 To disobey the Adelaide who scared  
 Her into vowing never to disclose  
 A secret to her husband, which so froze  
 His blood at half recital, she contrived  
 To hide from him Taurello's infant lived,  
 Lest, by revealing that, himself should mar  
 Romano's fortunes. And, a crime so far,  
 Palma received that action : she was told  
 Of Salinguerra's nature, of his cold  
 Calm acquiescence in his lot ! But free  
 To impart the secret to Romano, she  
 Engaged to repossess Sordello of  
 His heritage, and hers, and that way doff  
 The mask, but after years, long years ! — while now,  
 Was not Romano's sign-mark on that brow ? ”

Across Taurello's heart his arms were locked :  
 And when he did speak 't was as if he mocked  
 The minstrel, “ who had not to move,” he said,  
 “ Not stir — should Fate defraud him of a shred  
 Of his son's infancy ? much less of his youth ! ”  
 (Laughingly all this) — “ which to aid, in truth,  
 Himself, reserved on purpose, had not grown  
 Old, not too old — 't was best they kept alone  
 Till now, and never idly met till now ” ;  
 — Then, in the same breath, told Sordello how

All intimations of this eve's event  
 Were lies, for Friedrich must advance to Trent,  
 Thence to Verona, then to Rome, there stop,  
 Tumble the Church down, institute a-top  
 The Alps a Prefecture of Lombardy :

— “That's now! — no prophesying what may be  
 Anon, with a new monarch of the clime,  
 Native of Gesi, passing his youth's prime  
 At Naples. Tito bids my choice decide  
 On whom . . .”

“Embrace him, madman!” Palma cried,  
 Who through the laugh saw sweatdrops burst apace,  
 And his lips' blanching: he did not embrace  
 Sordello, but he laid Sordello's hand  
 On his own eyes, mouth, forehead.

Understand,  
 This while Sordello was becoming flushed  
 Out of his whiteness: thoughts rushed, fancies rushed;  
 He pressed his hand upon his head and signed  
 Both should forbear him. “Nay, the best's behind!”  
 Taurello laughed, — not quite with the same laugh:  
 “The truth is, thus we scatter, ay, like chaff  
 These Guelfs, a despicable monk recoils  
 From: nor expect a fickle Kaiser spoils  
 Our triumph! — Friedrich? Think you, I intend  
 Friedrich shall reap the fruits of blood I spend  
 And brain I waste? Think you, the people clap  
 Their hands at my out-hewing this wild gap  
 For any Friedrich to fill up? 'T is mine —

That's yours: I tell you, towards some such design  
Have I worked blindly, yes, and idly, yes,  
And for another, yes — but worked no less  
With instinct at my heart; I else had swerved,  
While now — look round! My cunning has preserved  
Samminiato — that's a central place  
Secures us Florence, boy, — in Pisa's case,  
By land as she by sea; with Pisa ours,  
And Florence, and Pistoia, one devours  
The land at leisure! Gloriously dispersed —  
Brescia, observe, Milan, Piacenza first  
That flanked us (ah, you know not!) in the March;  
On these we pile, as keystone of our arch,  
Romagna and Bologna, whose first span  
Covered the Trentine and the Valsugan;  
Sofia's Egna by Bolgiano's sure!" . . .  
So he proceeded: half of all this, pure  
Delusion, doubtless, nor the rest too true,  
But what was undone he felt sure to do,  
As ring by ring he wrung off, flung away  
The pauldrone-rings to give his sword-arm play —  
Need of the sword now! That would soon adjust  
Aught wrong at present; to the sword intrust  
Sordello's whiteness, undersize: 't was plain  
He hardly rendered right to his own brain —  
Like a brave hound, men educate to pride  
Himself on speed or scent nor aught beside,  
As though he could not, gift by gift, match men!  
Palma had listened patiently: but when

'T was time expostulate, attempt withdraw  
 Taurello from his child, she, without awe  
 Took off his iron arms from, one by one,  
 Sordello's shrinking shoulders, and, that done,  
 Made him avert his visage and relieve  
 Sordello (you might see his corselet heave  
 The while) who, loose, rose — tried to speak, then sank :  
 They left him in the chamber. All was blank.

And even reeling down the narrow stair  
 Taurello kept up, as though unaware  
 Palma was by to guide him, the old device  
 — Something of Milan — “ how we muster thrice  
 The Torriani’s strength there — all along  
 Our own Visconti cowed them ” — thus the song  
 Continued even while she bade him stoop,  
 Thrid somehow, by some glimpse of arrow-loop,  
 The turnings to the gallery below,  
 Where he stopped short as Palma let him go.  
 When he had sat in silence long enough  
 Splintering the stone bench, braving a rebuff  
 She stopt the truncheon ; only to commence  
 One of Sordello’s poems, a pretence  
 For speaking, some poor rhyme of “ Elys’ hair  
 And head that ’s sharp and perfect like a pear,  
 So smooth and close are laid the few fine locks  
 Stained like pale honey oozed from topmost rocks  
 Sun-blanch’d the livelong Summer ” — from his worst  
 Performance, the Goito, as his first :  
 And that at end, conceiving from the brow

And open mouth no silence would serve now,  
Went on to say the whole world loved that man  
And, for that matter, thought his face, tho' wan,  
Eclipsed the Count's — he sucking in each phrase  
As if an angel spoke. The foolish praise  
Ended, he drew her on his mailed knees, made  
Her face a framework with his hands, a shade,  
A crown, an aureole: there must she remain  
(Her little mouth compressed with smiling pain  
As in his gloves she felt her tresses twitch)  
To get the best look at, in fittest niche  
Dispose his saint. That done, he kissed her brow,  
— “Lauded her father for his treason now,”  
He told her, “only, how could one suspect  
The wit in him? — whose clansman, recollect,  
Was ever Salinguerra — she, the same,  
Romano and his lady — so, might claim  
To know all, as she should” — and thus begun  
Schemes with a vengeance, schemes on schemes, “not one  
Fit to be told that foolish boy,” he said,  
“But only let Sordello Palma wed,  
— Then!”

’T was a dim long narrow place at best:  
Midway a sole grate showed the fiery West,  
As shows its corpse the world’s end some split tomb —  
A gloom, a rift of fire, another gloom,  
Faced Palma — but at length Taurello set  
Her free; the grating held one ragged jet  
Of fierce gold fire: he lifted her within

The hollow underneath — how else begin  
Fate's second marvellous cycle, else renew  
The ages than with Palma plain in view ?  
Then paced the passage, hands clenched, head erect,  
Pursuing his discourse ; a grand unchecked  
Monotony made out from his quick talk  
And the recurring noises of his walk ;  
— Somewhat too much like the o'ercharged assent  
Of two resolved friends in one danger blent,  
Who hearten each the other against heart —  
Boasting there 's naught to care for, when, apart  
The boaster, all 's to care for. He, beside  
Some shape not visible, in power and pride  
Approached, out of the dark, ginglylly near,  
Nearer, passed close in the broad light, his ear  
Crimson, eyeballs suffused, temples full-fraught,  
Just a snatch of the rapid speech you caught,  
And on he strode into the opposite dark  
Till presently the harsh heel's turn, a spark  
I' the stone, and whirl of some loose embossed thong  
That crashed against the angle aye so long  
After the last, punctual to an amount  
Of mailed great paces you could not but count, —  
Prepared you for the pacing back again.  
And by the snatches you might ascertain  
That, Friedrich's Prefecture surmounted, left  
By this alone in Italy, they cleft  
Asunder, crushed together, at command  
Of none, were free to break up Hildebrand,

Rebuild, he and Sordello, Charlemagne —  
But garnished, Strength with Knowledge, “if we deign  
Accept that compromise and stoop to give  
Rome law, the Cæsars’ Representative.”

— Enough, that the illimitable flood  
Of triumphs after triumphs, understood  
In its faint reflux (you shall hear) sufficed  
Young Ecelin for appanage, enticed .

Him on till, these long quiet in their graves,  
He found ’t was looked for that a whole life’s braves  
Should somehow be made good — so, weak and worn,  
Must stagger up at Milan, one gray morn  
Of the To-Come, and fight his latest fight.

But, Salinguerra’s prophecy at height —  
He voluble with a raised arm and stiff,  
A blaring voice, a blazing eye, as if  
He had our very Italy to keep  
Or cast away, or gather in a heap  
To garrison the better — ay, his word  
Was, “run the cucumber into a gourd,  
Drive Trent upon Apulia” — at their pitch  
Who spied the continents and islands which  
Grew mulberry-leaves and sickles, in the map —  
(Strange that three such confessions so should hap  
To Palma, Dante spoke with in the clear  
Amorous silence of the Swooning-sphere, —  
*Cunizza*, as he called her! Never ask  
Of Palma more! She sat, knowing her task  
Was done, the labor of it — for, success,

Concerned not Palma, passion's votaries)  
Triumph at height, and thus Sordello crowned—  
Above the passage suddenly a sound  
Stops speech, stops walk: back shrinks Taurello, bids  
With large involuntary asking lids,  
Palma interpret. “ ‘T is his own foot-stamp—  
Your hand! His summons! Nay, this idle damp  
Befits not!” Out they two reeled dizzily.  
“ Visconti’s strong at Milan,” resumed he,  
In the old, somewhat insignificant way—  
(Was Palma wont, years afterward, to say)  
As though the spirit’s flight, sustained thus far,  
Dropped at that very instant. Gone they are—  
Palma, Taurello; Eglamor anon,  
Ecelin,—only Naddo’s never gone!  
— Labors, this moonrise, what the Master meant  
“ Is Squarcialupo speckled? — purulent,  
I’d say, but when was Providence put out?  
He carries somehow handily about  
His spite nor fouls himself!” Goito’s vines  
Stand like a cheat detected — stark rough lines,  
The moon breaks through, a gray mean scale against  
The vault where, this eve’s Maiden, thou remain’st  
Like some fresh martyr, eyes fixed — who can tell?  
As Heaven, now all’s at end, did not so well,  
Spite of the faith and victory, to leave  
Its virgin quite to death in the lone eve.  
While the persisting hermit-bee . . . ha! wait  
No longer — these in compass, forward fate!

## BOOK THE SIXTH.

AT THE CLOSE OF A DAY OR A LIFE,

THE thought of Eglamor 's least like a thought,  
And yet a false one, was, " Man shrinks to naught  
If matched with symbols of immensity —  
Must quail, forsooth, before a quiet sky  
Or sea, too little for their quietude " :  
And, truly, somewhat in Sordello's mood  
Confirmed its speciousness, while eve slow sank  
Down the near terrace to the farther bank,  
And only one spot left out of the night  
Glimmered upon the river opposite —  
A breadth of watery heaven like a bay,  
A sky-like space of water, ray for ray,  
And star for star, one richness where they mixed  
As this and that wing of an angel, fixed,  
Tumultuary splendors folded in  
To die. Nor turned he till Ferrara's din  
(Say, the monotonous speech from a man's lip  
Who lets some first and eager purpose slip  
In a new fancy's birth ; the speech keeps on  
Though elsewhere its informing soul be gone)  
— Aroused him, — surely offered succor. Fate  
Paused with this eve ; ere she precipitate  
Herself, — put off strange after-thoughts awhile,  
That voice, those large hands, that portentous smile, —

What help to pierce the Future as the Past,  
Lay in the plaining city ?

And at last

The main discovery and prime concern,  
All that just now imported him to learn,  
His truth, like yonder slow moon to complete  
Heaven, rose again, and, naked at his feet,  
Lighted his old life's every shift and change,  
Effort with counter-effort ; nor the range  
Of each looked wrong except wherein it checked,  
Some other — which of these could he suspect,  
Prying into them by the sudden blaze ?  
The real way seemed made up of all the ways —  
Mood after mood of the one mind in him ;  
Tokens of the existence, bright or dim,  
Of a transcendent all-embracing sense  
Demanding only outward influence,  
A soul, in Palma's phrase, above his soul,  
Power to uplift his power, — this moon's control,  
Over the sea-depths, — and their mass had swept  
Onward from the beginning and still kept  
Its course : but years and years the sky above  
Held none, and so, untasked of any love,  
His sensitiveness idled, now amort,  
Alive now, and to sullenness or sport  
Given wholly up, disposed itself anew  
At every passing instigation, grew  
And dwindled at caprice, in foam-showers spilt,  
Wedge-like insisting, quivered now a gilt

Shield in the sunshine, now a blinding race  
Of whitest ripples o'er the reef — found place  
For much display ; not gathered up and, hurled  
Right from its heart, encompassing the world.  
So had Sordello been, by consequence,  
Without a function : others made pretence  
To strength not half his own, yet had some core  
Within, submitted to some moon, before  
Them still, superior still whate'er their force, —  
Were able therefore to fulfil a course,  
Nor missed life's crown, authentic attribute.  
To each who lives must be a certain fruit  
Of having lived in his degree, — a stage,  
Earlier or later in men's pilgrimage,  
To stop at ; and to this the spirits tend  
Who, still discovering beauty without end,  
Amass the scintillations, make one star  
— Something unlike them, self-sustained, afar, —  
And meanwhile nurse the dream of being blest  
By winning it to notice and invest  
Their souls with alien glory, some one day  
Whene'er the nucleus, gathering shape alway,  
Round to the perfect circle — soon or late,  
According as themselves are formed to wait ;  
Whether mere human beauty will suffice  
— The yellow hair and the luxurious eyes,  
Or human intellect seem best, or each  
Combine in some ideal form past reach  
On earth, or else some shade of these, some aim,

Some love, hate even, take their place, the same,  
 And may be served — all this they do not lose,  
 Waiting for death to live, nor idly choose  
 What must be Hell — a progress thus pursued  
 Through all existence, still above the food  
 That 's offered them, still towering beyond  
 The widened range, in virtue of their bond  
 Of sovereignty. Not that a Palma's Love,  
 A Salinguerra's Hate, would equal prove  
 To swaying all Sordello: wherefore doubt,  
 That Love meet for such Strength, some moon without  
 Would match his sea? — or fear, Good manifest,  
 Only the Best breaks faith? — Ah, but the Best  
 Somehow eludes us ever, still might be  
 And is not! crave we gems? no penury  
 Of their material round us! pliant earth,  
 The plastic flame — what balks the mage his birth  
 — Jacynth in balls, or lodestone by the block?  
 Flinders enrich the strand, and veins the rock —  
 Naught more! Ask creatures? Life's i' the tempest,

Thought

Clothes the keen hill-top, midday woods are fraught  
 With fervors: ah, these forms are well enough!  
 But we had hoped, encouraged by the stuff  
 Profuse at Nature's pleasure, men beyond  
 These men! and thus, perchance, are over-fond  
 In arguing, from Good the Best, from force  
 Divided — force combined, an ocean's course  
 From this our sea whose mere intestine pants

Might seem at times sufficient to our wants.  
— External Power? If none be adequate  
And he stand forth ordained (a prouder fate)  
A law to his own sphere? — need to remove  
All incompleteness, for that law, that love?  
Nay, if all other laws be such, though veiled  
In mercy to each vision that had failed  
If unassisted by its want, — for lure,  
Embodyed? Stronger vision could endure  
The unbodied want: no bauble for a truth!  
The People were himself; and, by the ruth  
At their condition, was he less impelled  
To alter the discrepancy beheld,  
Than if, from the sound Whole, a sickly Part  
Subtracted were transformed, decked out with art,  
Then palmed on him as alien woe — the Guelf  
To succor, proud that he forsook himself?  
No! All's himself; all service, therefore, rates  
Alike, nor serving one part, immolates  
The rest: but all in time! “That lance of yours  
Makes havoc soon with Malek and his Moors,  
That buckler's lined with many a giant's beard  
Ere long, O champion, be the lance upreared,  
The buckler wielded handsomely as now!  
But view your escort, bear in mind your vow,  
Count the pale tracts of sand to pass ere that,  
And, if you hope we struggle through the flat,  
Put lance and buckler by! Next half-month lacks  
Mere sturdy exercise of mace and axe

To cleave this dismal brake of prickly-pear  
 Which bristling holds Cydippe by the hair,  
 Lames barefoot Agathon: this felled, we 'll try  
 The picturesque achievements by and by —  
 Next life!"

Ay, rally, mock, O People, urge  
 Your claims! — for thus he ventured, to the verge,  
 Push a vain mummery which perchance distrust  
 Of his fast-slipping resolution thrust  
 Likewise: accordingly the Crowd — as yet  
 He had unconsciously contrived forget  
 I' the whole, to dwell o' the points . . . one might  
 assuage

The signal horrors easier than engage  
 With a dim vulgar vast unobvious grief  
 Not to be fancied off, nor gained relief  
 In brilliant fits, cured by a happy quirk,  
 But by dim vulgar vast unobvious work  
 To correspond . . . this Crowd then, forth they stood.  
 " And now content thy stronger vision, brood  
 On thy bare want; uncovered, turf by turf,  
 Study the corpse-face thro' the taint-worms' scurf!"

Down sank the People's Then; uprose their Now.  
 These sad ones render service to! And how  
 Piteously little must that service prove  
 — Had surely proved in any case! for, move  
 Each other obstacle away, let youth  
 Have been aware it had surprised a truth  
 'T were service to impart — can truth be seized,

Settled forthwith, and, of the captive eased,  
Its captor find fresh prey, since this alit  
So happily, no gesture luring it,  
The earnest of a flock to follow? Vain,  
Most vain! a life's to spend ere this he chain,  
To the poor crowd's complacence; ere the crowd  
Pronounce it captured, he descries a cloud  
Its kin of twice the plume — which he, in turn,  
If he shall live as many lives, may learn  
How to secure — not else. Then Mantua called  
Back to his mind how certain bards were thralled  
— Buds blasted, but of breath more like perfume  
Than Naddo's staring nosegay's carrion bloom:  
Some insane rose that burnt heart out in sweets,  
A spendthrift in the Spring, no Summer greets —  
Some Dularete, drunk with truths and wine,  
Grown bestial, dreaming how become divine.  
“ Yet to surmount this obstacle, commence  
With the commencement, merits crowning! Hence  
Must truth be casual truth, elicited  
In sparks so mean, at intervals disspread  
So rarely, that 't is like at no one time  
Of the world's story has not truth, the prime  
Of truth, the very truth which, loosed, had hurled  
The world's course right, been really in the world  
— Content the while with some mean spark by dint  
Of some chance-blow, the solitary hint  
Of buried fire, which, rip its breast, would stream  
Sky-ward!”

Sordello's miserable gleam  
Was looked for at the moment: he would dash  
This badge, and all it brought, to earth,— abash  
Taurello thus, perhaps persuade him wrest  
The Kaiser from his purpose,— would attest  
His own belief, in any case. Before  
He dashes it, however, think once more!  
For, were that little, truly service? “Ay—  
I’ the end, no doubt; but meantime? Plain you spy  
Its ultimate effect, but many flaws  
Of vision blur each intervening cause.  
Were the day’s fraction clear as the life’s sum  
Of service, Now as filled as the To-come  
With evidence of good — nor too minute  
A share to vie with evil! No dispute,  
’T were fitliest maintain the Guelfs in rule:  
That makes your life’s work: but you have to school  
Your day’s work on these natures circumstanced  
Thus variously, which yet, as each advanced  
Or might impede the Guelf rule, must be moved  
Now, for the Then’s sake,— hating what you loved,  
Loving old hatreds! nor if one man bore  
Brand upon temples while his fellow wore  
The aureole, would it task you to decide—  
But, portioned duly out, the Future vied  
Never with the unparcelled Present! Smite  
Or spare so much on warrant all so slight?  
The Present’s complete sympathies to break,  
Aversions bear with, for a Future’s sake

So feeble? Tito ruined through one speck,  
The Legate saved by his sole lightish fleck?  
This were work, true — but work performed at cost  
Of other work — aught gained here, elsewhere lost.  
For a new segment spoil an orb half done?  
Rise with the People one step, and sink — one?  
Were it but one step — less than the whole face  
Of things, your novel duty bids erase!  
Harms to abolish! what? the prophet saith,  
The minstrel singeth vainly then? Old faith,  
Old courage, only born because of harms,  
Were not, from highest to the lowest, charms?  
Flame may persist but is not glare as stanch?  
Where the salt marshes stagnate, crystals branch —  
Blood dries to crimson — Evil's beautified  
In every shape. Thrust Beauty then aside  
And banish Evil! wherefore? After all,  
Is Evil a result less natural  
Than Good? For, overlook the seasons' strife  
With tree and flower, — the hideous animal life, . . .  
(Of which who seeks shall find a grinning taunt  
For his solution, and endure the vaunt  
Of nature's angel, as a child that knows  
Himself befooled, unable to propose  
Aught better than the fooling) — and but care  
For Men, for the mere People then and there, —  
In these, could you but see that Good and Ill  
Claimed you alike! Whence rose their claim but still  
From Ill, as fruit of Ill — what else could knit

You theirs but Sorrow ? Any free from it  
Were also free from you ! Whose happiness  
Could be distinguished in this morning's press  
Of miseries ? — the fool's who passed a gibe  
'On thee,' jeered he, 'so wedded to thy tribe,  
Thou carriest green and yellow tokens in  
Thy very face that thou art Ghibellin !' —  
Much hold on you that fool obtained ! Nay mount  
Yet higher — and upon men's own account  
Must Evil stay : for, what is Joy ? — to heave  
Up one obstruction more, and common leave  
What was peculiar — by such act destroy  
Itself ; a partial death is every joy ;  
The sensible escape, enfranchisement  
Of a sphere's essence : once the vexed — content,  
The cramped — at large, the growing circle — round,  
All's to begin again — some novel bound  
To break, some new enlargement to entreat,  
The sphere though larger is not more complete.  
Now for Mankind's experience : who alone  
Might style the unobstructed world his own ?  
Whom palled Goito with its perfect things ?  
Sordello's self ! whereas for mankind springs  
Salvation by each hindrance interposed ;  
They climb, life's view is not at once disclosed  
To creatures caught up, on its summit left,  
Heaven plain above them, yet of wings bereft —  
But lower laid, as at the mountain's foot,  
While, range on range, the girdling forests shoot

‘Twixt your plain prospect and the throngs who scale  
Height after height, and pierce mists, veil by veil,  
Heartened with each discovery ; in their soul,  
The Whole they seek by Parts — but, found that Whole,  
Could they revert, enjoy past gains ? The space  
Of time you judge so meagre to embrace  
The Parts, were more than plenty, once attained  
The Whole, to quite exhaust it : naught were gained  
But leave to look — not leave to do : Beneath  
Soon sates the looker — look Above, and Death  
Tempts ere a tithe of Life be tasted. Live  
First, and die soon enough, Sordello ! Give  
Body and spirit the first right they claim,  
And pasture thee on a voluptuous shame  
That thou, a pageant-city’s denizen,  
Art neither vilely lodged midst Lombard men —  
Canst force joy out of sorrow, seem to truck  
Thine attributes away for sordid muck,  
Yet manage from that very muck educe  
Gold ; then subject, nor scruple, to thy cruce  
The world’s discardings ! Though real ingots pay  
Thy pains, the clods that yielded them are clay  
To all save thee, — would clay remain, though quenched  
Thy purging-fire ; who ’s robbed then ? Had you  
wrenched  
An ampler treasure forth ! — As ’t is, they crave  
A share that ruins you and will not save  
Them. Why should sympathy command you quit  
The course that makes your joy, nor will remit

Their woe? Would all arrive at joy? Reverse  
 The order (time instructs you) nor coerce  
 Each unit till, some predetermined mode,  
 The total be emancipate; men's road  
 Is one, men's times of travel many; thwart  
 No enterprising soul's precocious start  
 Before the general march! if slow or fast  
 All straggle up to the same point at last,  
 Why grudge your having gained, a month ago,  
 The brakes at balm-shed, asphodels in blow,  
 While they were landlocked? Speed there Then, but how  
 This badge would suffer you improve your Now!"

His time of action for, against, or with  
 Our world (I labor to extract the pith  
 Of this his problem) grew, that even-tide,  
 Gigantic with its power of joy, beside  
 The world's eternity of impotence  
 To profit though at his whole joy's expense.  
 " Make nothing of my day because so brief?  
 Rather make more — instead of joy, use grief  
 Before its novelty have time subside!  
 Wait not for the late savour — leave untried  
 Virtue, the creaming honey-wine, quick squeeze  
 Vice like a biting spirit from the lees  
 Of life! — together let wrath, hatred, lust,  
 All tyrannies in every shape, be thrust  
 Upon this Now, which time may reason out  
 As mischiefs, far from benefits, no doubt —  
 But long ere then Sordello will have slipt

Away — you teach him at Goito's crypt,  
There 's a blank issue to that fiery thrill !  
Stirring, the few cope with the many, still :  
So much of sand as, quiet, makes a mass  
Unable to produce three tufts of grass,  
Shall, troubled by the whirlwind, render void  
The whole calm glebe's endeavor : be employed !  
And e'en though somewhat smart the Crowd for this,  
Contribute each his pang to make your bliss,  
'T is but one pang — one blood-drop to the bowl  
Which brimful tempts the sluggish asp uncowl  
At last, stains ruddily the dull red cape,  
And, kindling orbs gray as the unripe grape  
Before, avails forthwith to disentrance  
The portent — soon to lead a mystic dance  
Among you ! For, who sits alone in Rome ?  
Have those great hands indeed hewn out a home,  
And set me there to live ? O life, life-breath,  
Life-blood, — ere sleep, come travail, life ere death !  
This life stream on my soul, direct, oblique,  
But always streaming ! Hindrances ? They pique —  
Helps ? such . . . but why repeat, my soul o'ertops  
Each height, than every depth profoundlier drops ?  
Enough that I can live, and would live ! Wait  
For some transcendent life reserved by Fate  
To follow this ? O, never ! Fate, I trust  
The same, my soul to ; for, as who flings dust,  
Perchance — so facile was the deed, she checked  
The void with these materials to affect

My soul diversely — these consigned anew  
To naught by death, what marvel if she threw  
A second and superber spectacle  
Before it ? What may serve for sun — what still  
Wander a moon above me — what else wind  
About me like the pleasures left behind,  
And how shall some new flesh that is not flesh  
Cling to me ? what 's new laughter — soothes the fresh  
Sleep like sleep ? Fate's exhaustless for my sake  
In brave resource, but whether bids she slake  
My thirst at this first rivulet, or count  
No draught worth lip save from the rocky fount  
Above i' the clouds, while here she 's provident  
Of pure loquacious pearl, the soft tree-tent  
Guards, with its face of reate and sedge, nor fail  
The silver globules and gold-sparkling grail  
At bottom. O, 't were too absurd to slight  
For the hereafter the to-day's delight !

Quench thirst at this, then seek next well-spring — wear  
Home-lilies ere strange lotus in my hair !

Here is the Crowd, whom I with freest heart  
Offer to serve, contented for my part  
To give life up in service, — only grant  
That I do serve ; if otherwise, why want  
Aught further of me ? If men cannot choose  
But set aside life, why should I refuse  
The gift ? I take it — I, for one, engage  
Never to falter through my pilgrimage —  
Nor end it howling that the stock or stone

Were enviable, truly: I, for one,  
Will praise the world, you style mere anteroom  
To the palace — be it so! shall I assume  
— My foot the courtly gait, my tongue the trope,  
My mouth the smirk, before the doors fly ope  
One moment? What — with guarders row on row,  
Gay swarms of varletry that come and go,  
Pages to dice with, waiting-girls unlace  
The plackets of, pert claimants help displace,  
Heart-heavy suitors get a rank for, — laugh  
At yon sleek parasite, break his own staff  
'Cross Beetle-brows the Usher's shoulder, — why,  
Admitted to the presence by and by,  
Should thought of having lost these make me grieve  
Among new joys I reach, for joys I leave?  
— Cool citrine-crystals, fierce pyropus-stone,  
Are floor-work here! — But did I let alone  
That black-eyed peasant in the vestibule  
Once and forever? — Floor-work? No such fool!  
Rather, were heaven to forestall earth, I'd say  
I, is it, must be blessed? Then, my own way  
Bless me! give firmer arm and fleeter foot,  
I'll thank you: but to no mad wings transmute  
These limbs of mine — our greensward was so soft!  
Nor camp I on the thunder-cloud aloft:  
We feel the bliss distinctlier, having thus  
Engines subservient, not mixed up with us.  
Better move palpably through heaven — nor, freed  
Of flesh, forsooth, from space to space proceed

'Mid flying synods of worlds ! No ! In heaven's marge  
Show Titan still, recumbent o'er his targe  
Solid with stars — the Centaur at his game,  
Made tremulously out in hoary flame !

Life ! Yet the very cup whose extreme dull  
Dregs, even, I would quaff, was dashed, at full,  
Aside so oft ; the death I fly, revealed  
So oft a better life this life concealed,  
And which sage, champion, martyr, through each path  
Have hunted fearlessly — the horrid bath,  
The crippling-irons and the fiery chair.

— 'T was well for them ; let me become aware  
As they, and I relinquish life, too ! Let  
What masters life disclose itself ! Forget  
Vain ordinances, I have one appeal —  
I feel, am what I feel, know what I feel  
— So much is truth to me. What Is, then ? Since  
One object, viewed diversely, may evince  
Beauty and ugliness — this way attract,  
That way repel, why gloze upon the fact ?  
Why must a single of the sides be right ?  
What bids choose this and leave the opposite ?  
Where 's abstract Right for me ? — in youth endued  
With Right still present, still to be pursued,  
Thro' all the interchange of circles, rife  
Each with its proper law and mode of life,  
Each to be dwelt at ease in : where, to sway  
Absolute with the Kaiser, or obey  
Implicit with his serf of fluttering heart,

Or, like a sudden thought of God's, to start  
 Up, Brutus in the presence, then go shout  
 That some should pick the unstrung jewels out —  
 Each, well!"

And, as in moments when the Past  
 Gave partially enfranchisement, he cast  
 Himself quite through mere secondary states  
 Of his soul's essence, little loves and hates,  
 Into the mid deep yearnings overlaid  
 By these; as who should pierce hill, plain, grove,  
 glade,  
 And on into the very nucleus probe  
 That first determined there exist a globe.  
 As that were easiest, half the globe dissolved,  
 So seemed Sordello's closing-truth evolved  
 By his flesh-half's break up — the sudden swell  
 Of his expanding soul showed Ill and Well,  
 Sorrow and Joy, Beauty and Ugliness,  
 Virtue and Vice, the Larger and the Less,  
 All qualities, in fine, recorded here,  
 Might be but modes of Time and this one sphere,  
 Urgent on these, but not of force to bind  
 Eternity, as Time — as Matter — Mind,  
 If Mind, Eternity, should choose assert  
 Their attributes within a Life: thus girt  
 With circumstance, next change beholds them cinct  
 Quite otherwise — with Good and Ill distinct,  
 Joys, sorrows, tending to a like result —  
 Contrived to render easy, difficult,

This or the other course of . . . what new bond  
In place of flesh may stop their flight beyond  
Its new sphere, as that course does harm or good  
To its arrangements. Once this understood,  
As suddenly he felt himself alone,  
Quite out of Time and this world: all was known.  
What made the secret of his past despair?  
— Most imminent when he seemed most aware  
Of his own self-sufficiency; made mad  
By craving to expand the power he had,  
And not new power to be expanded? — just  
This made it; Soul on Matter being thrust,  
Joy comes when so much Soul is wreaked in Time  
On Matter, — let the Soul's attempt sublime  
Matter beyond the scheme and so prevent  
By more or less that deed's accomplishment,  
And Sorrow follows: Sorrow how avoid?  
Let the employer match the thing employed,  
Fit to the finite his infinity,  
And thus proceed forever, in degree  
Changed but in kind the same, still limited  
To the appointed circumstance and dead  
To all beyond. A sphere is but a sphere —  
Small, Great, are merely terms we bandy here —  
Since to the spirit's absoluteness all  
Are like: now, of the present sphere we call.  
Life, are conditions — take but this among  
Many; the body was to be so long  
Youthful, no longer — but, since no control

Tied to that body's purposes his soul,  
She chose to understand the body's trade  
More than the body's self — had fain conveyed  
Her boundless, to the body's bounded lot :  
Hence, the soul permanent, the body not, —  
Scarce the one minute for enjoying here,  
The soul must needs instruct her weak compeer,  
Run o'er its capabilities and wring  
A joy thence, the held worth experiencing —  
Which, far from half discovered even, — lo,  
The minute gone, the body's power let go  
That 's portioned to that joy's acquirement ! Broke  
Morning o'er earth, he yearned for all it woke —  
From the volcano's vapor-flag, winds hoist  
Black o'er the spread of sea, — down to the moist  
Dale's silken barley-spikes sullied with rain,  
Swayed earthwards, heavily to rise again —  
(The Small, a sphere as perfect as the Great  
To the soul's absoluteness) — meditate  
Too long on such a morning's cluster-chord  
And the whole music it was framed afford, —  
The chord's might half discovered, what should pluck  
One string, his finger, was found palsy-struck.  
And then no marvel if the spirit, shone  
A saddest sight — the body lost alone  
Through her officious proffered help, deprived  
Of this and that enjoyment Fate contrived,  
Virtue, Good, Beauty, each allowed slip hence, —  
Vain-gloriously were fain, for recompense,

To stem the ruin even yet, protract  
The body's term, supply the power it lacked  
From her infinity, compel it learn  
These qualities were only Time's concern,  
And body may, with spirit helping, barred —  
Advance the same, vanquished — obtain reward,  
Reap joy where sorrow was intended grow,  
Of Wrong make Right, and turn Ill Good below.  
And the result is, the poor body soon  
Sinks under what was meant a wondrous boon,  
Leaving its bright accomplice all aghast.

So much was plain then, proper in the Past;  
To be complete for, satisfy the whole  
Series of spheres — Eternity, his soul  
Exceeded, so was incomplete for, each  
Single sphere — Time. But does our knowledge reach  
No farther? Is the cloud of hindrance broke  
But by the failing of the fleshly yoke,  
Its loves and hates, as now when death lets soar  
Sordello, self-sufficient as before,  
Though during the mere space that shall elapse  
'Twixt his enthralment in new bonds, perhaps?  
Must life be ever just escaped, which should  
Have been enjoyed? — nay, might have been and would,  
Each purpose ordered right — the soul's no whit  
Beyond the body's purpose under it —  
Like yonder breadth of watery heaven, a bay,  
And that sky-space of water, ray for ray  
And star for star, one richness where they mixed

As this and that wing of an angel, fixed,  
Tumultuary splendors folded in  
To die — would soul, proportioned thus, begin  
Exciting discontent, or surelier quell  
The body if, aspiring, it rebel ?  
But how so order life ? Still brutalize  
The soul, the sad world's way, with muffled eyes  
To all that was before, all that shall be  
After this sphere — and every quality  
Save some sole and immutable Great and Good  
And Beauteous whither fate has loosed its hood  
To follow ? Never may some soul see All  
— The Great Before and After, and the Small  
Now, yet be saved by this the simplest lore,  
And take the single course prescribed before,  
As the king-bird with ages on his plumes  
Travels to die in his ancestral glooms ?  
But where descry the Love that shall select  
That course ? Here is a soul whom, to affect,  
Nature has plied with all her means — from trees  
And flowers — e'en to the Multitude ! — and these,  
Decides he save or no ? One word to end !”

    Ah my Sordello, I this once befriend  
And speak for you. Of a Power above you still  
Which, utterly incomprehensible,  
Is out of rivalry, which thus you can  
Love, tho' unloving all conceived by man —  
What need ! And of — none the minutest duct  
To that out-nature, naught that would instruct

And so let rivalry begin to live —  
 But of a Power its representative  
 Who, being for authority the same,  
 Communication different, should claim  
 A course, the first chose and this last revealed —  
 This Human clear, as that Divine concealed —  
 What utter need !

What has Sordello found ?

Or can his spirit go the mighty round,  
 End where poor Eglamor begun ? as says  
 Old fable, the two eagles went two ways  
 About the world : where, in the midst, they met,  
 Though on a shifting waste of sand, men set  
 Jove's temple. Quick, what has Sordello found ?  
 For they approach — approach — that foot's rebound . . .  
 Palma ? No, Salinguerra though in mail ;  
 They mount, have reached the threshold, dash the veil  
 Aside — and you divine who sat there dead,  
 Under his foot the badge : still, Palma said,  
 A triumph lingering in the wide eyes,  
 Wider than some spent swimmer's if he spies  
 Help from above in his extreme despair,  
 And, head far back on shoulder thrust, turns there  
 With short, quick, passionate cry : as Palma prest  
 In one great kiss her lips upon his breast  
 It beat. By this, the hermit-bee has stopped  
 His day's toil at Goito : the new-cropped  
 Dead vine-leaf answers, now 't is eve, he bit,  
 Twirled so, and filed all day : the mansion 's fit,

God counselled for. As easy guess the word  
That passed betwixt them and become the third  
To the soft small unfrighted bœ, as tax  
Him with one fault — so, no remembrance racks  
Of the stone maidens and the font of stone  
He, creeping through the crevice, leaves alone.  
Alas, my friend — alas Sordello, whom  
Anon they laid within that old font-tomb —  
And, yet again, alas !

And now is 't worth

Our while bring back to mind, much less set forth  
How Salinguerra extricates himself  
Without Sordello? Ghibellin and Guelf  
May fight their fiercest out? If Richard sulked  
In durance or the Marquis paid his mulct,  
Who cares, Sordello gone? The upshot, sure,  
Was peace; our chief made some frank overture  
That prospered; compliment fell thick and fast  
On its disposer, and Taurello passed  
With foe and friend for an outstripping soul,  
Nine days at least. Then, — fairly reached the goal, —  
He, by one effort, blotted the great hope  
Out of his mind, nor further tried to cope  
With Este, that mad evening's style, but sent  
Away the Legate and the League, content  
No blame at least the brothers had incurred,  
— Despatched a message to the Monk, he heard  
Patiently first to last, scarce shivered at,  
Then curled his limbs up on his wolfskin mat

And ne'er spoke more,— informed the Ferrarese  
He but retained their rule so long as these  
Lingered in pupilage,— and last, no mode  
Apparent else of keeping safe the road  
From Germany direct to Lombardy  
For Friedrich,— none, that is, to guarantee  
The faith and promptitude of who should next  
Obtain Sofia's dowry,— sore perplexed—  
(Sofia being youngest of the tribe  
Of daughters, Ecelin was wont to bribe  
The envious magnates with— nor, since he sent  
Henry of Egna this fair child, had Trent  
Once failed the Kaiser's purposes — “we lost  
Egna last year, and who takes Egna's post —  
Opens the Lombard gate if Friedrich knock ? ”)  
Himself espoused the Lady of the Rock  
In pure necessity, and so destroyed  
His slender last of chances, quite made void  
Old prophecy, and spite of all the schemes  
Overt and covert, youth's deeds, age's dreams,  
Was sucked into Romano. And so hushed  
He up this evening's work that, when 't was brushed  
Somehow against by a blind chronicle  
Which, chronicling whatever woe befell  
Ferrara, noted this the obscure woe  
Of “Salinguerra's sole son Giacomo  
Deceased, fatuous and doting, ere his sire,”  
The townsfolk rubbed their eyes, could but admire  
Which of Sofia's five was meant.

## The chaps

Of earth's dead hope were tardy to collapse,  
Obliterated not the beautiful  
Distinctive features at a crash — but dull  
And duller, next year, as Guelf chiefs withdrew  
Each to his stronghold. Then (securely too  
Ecelin at Campese slept — close by,  
Who likes may see him in Solagna lie  
With cushioned head and gloved hand to denote  
The cavalier he was) — then his heart smote  
Young Ecelin at last! — long since adult,  
And, save Vicenza's business, what result  
In blood and blaze? ('t was hard to intercept  
Sordello till his plain withdrawal.) Stept,  
Then, its new lord on Lombardy. I' the nick  
Of time when Ecelin and Alberic  
Closed with Taurello, come precisely news  
That in Verona half the souls refuse  
Allegiance to the Marquis and the Count —  
Have cast them from a throne they bid him mount,  
Their Podestà, thro' his ancestral worth.  
Ecelin flew there, and the town henceforth  
Was wholly his — Taurello sinking back  
From temporary station to a track  
That suited. News received of this acquist,  
Friedrich did come to Lombardy: who missed  
Taurello then? Another year: they took  
Vicenza, left the Marquis scarce a nook  
For refuge, and, when hundreds two or three

Of Guelfs conspired to call themselves "the Free,"  
Opposing Alberic,—vile Bassanese,—  
(Without Sordello!) — Ecelin at ease  
Slaughtered them so observably, that oft  
A little Salinguerra looked with soft  
Blue eyes up, asked his sire the proper age  
To get appointed his proud uncle's page.  
More years passed, and that sire had dwindled down  
To a mere showy turbulent soldier, grown  
Better through age, his parts still in repute,  
Subtle — how else? — but hardly so astute  
As his contemporaneous friends professed ;  
Undoubtedly a brawler : for the rest,  
Known by each neighbor, and allowed for, let  
Keep his incorrigible ways, nor fret  
Men who had missed their boyhood's bugbear — " trap  
The ostrich, suffer our bald osprey flap  
A battered pinion " — was the word. In fine,  
One flap too much and Venice's marine  
Was meddled with ; no overlooking that !  
She captured him in his Ferrara, fat  
And florid at a banquet, more by fraud  
Than force, to speak the truth ; there 's slender laud  
Ascribed you for assisting eighty years  
To pull his death on such a man — fate shears  
The life-cord prompt enough whose last fine threads  
You fritter : so, presiding his board-head,  
The old smile, your assurance all went well  
With Friedrich (as if he were like to tell !)

In rushed (a plan contrived before) our friends,  
Made some pretence at fighting, some amends  
For the shame done his eighty years — (apart  
The principle, none found it in his heart  
To be much angry with Taurello) — gained  
Their galleys with the prize, and what remained  
But carry him to Venice for a show?

— Set him, as 't were, down gently — free to go  
His gait, inspect our square, pretend observe  
The swallows soaring their eternal curve  
'Twixt Theodore and Mark, if citizens  
Gathered importunately, fives and tens,  
To point their children the Magnifico,  
All but a monarch once in firm-land, go  
His gait among them now — “ it took, indeed,  
Fully this Ecelin to supersede  
That man,” remarked the seniors. Singular!  
Sordello’s inability to bar  
Rivals the stage, that evening, mainly brought  
About by his strange disbelief that aught  
Was ever to be done, — this thrust the Twain  
Under Taurello’s tutelage, — whom, brain  
And heart and hand, he forthwith in one rod  
Indissolubly bound to baffle God  
Who loves the world — and thus allowed the thin  
Gray wizened dwarfish devil Ecelin,  
And massy-muscled big-boned Alberic.  
(Mere man, alas !) to put his problem quick  
To demonstration — prove wherever’s will

To do, there 's plenty to be done, or ill  
Or good. Anointed, then, to rend and rip —  
Kings of the gag and flesh-hook, screw and whip,  
They plagued the world : a touch of Hildebrand  
(So far from obsolete !) made Lombards band  
Together, cross their coats as for Christ's cause,  
And saving Milan win the world's applause.  
Ecelin perished : and I think grass grew  
Never so pleasant as in Valley Rù  
By San Zenon where Alberic in turn  
Saw his exasperated captors burn  
Seven children and their mother ; then, regaled  
So far, tied on to a wild horse, was trailed  
To death through raunce and bramble-bush. I take  
God's part and testify that mid the brake  
Wild o'er his castle on the pleasant knoll,  
You hear its one tower left, a belfry, toll —  
The earthquake spared it last year, laying flat  
The modern church beneath, — no harm in that !  
Cherups the contumacious grasshopper,  
Rustles the lizard and the cushats chirre  
Above the ravage : there, at deep of day  
A week since, heard I the old Canon say  
He saw with his own eyes a barrow burst  
And Alberic's huge skeleton unhearsed  
Only five years ago. He added, " June 's  
The month for carding off our first cocoons  
The silkworms fabricate " — a double news,  
Nor he nor I could tell the worthier. Choose !

And Naddo gone, all's gone; not Eglamor!  
Believe, I knew the face I waited for,  
A guest my spirit of the golden courts!  
O strange to see how, despite ill-reports,  
Disuse, some wear of years, that face retained  
Its joyous look of love! Suns waxed and waned,  
And still my spirit held an upward flight,  
Spiral on spiral, gyres of life and light  
More and more gorgeous — ever that face there  
The last admitted! crossed, too, with some care  
As perfect triumph were not sure for all,  
But, on a few, enduring damp must fall,  
— A transient struggle, haply a painful sense  
Of the inferior nature's clinging — whence  
Slight starting tears easily wiped away,  
Fine jealousies soon stifled in the play  
Of irrepressible admiration — not  
Aspiring, all considered, to their lot  
Who ever, just as they prepare ascend  
Spiral on spiral, wish thee well, impend  
Thy frank delight at their exclusive track,  
That upturned fervid face and hair put back!

Is there no more to say? He of the rhymes —  
Many a tale, of this retreat betimes,  
Was born: Sordello die at once for men?  
The Chroniclers of Mantua tired their pen  
Telling how *Sordello Prince Visconti* saved  
Mantua, and elsewhere notably behaved —  
Who thus, by fortune's ordering events,

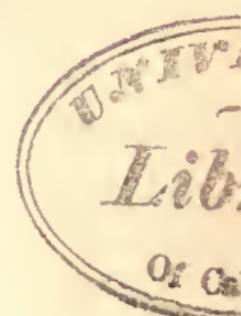
Passed with posterity, to all intents,  
For just the God he never could become.  
As Knight, Bard, Gallant, men were never dumb  
In praise of him: while what he should have been,  
Could be, and was not — the one step too mean  
For him to take, — we suffer at this day  
Because of: Ecelin had pushed away  
Its chance ere Dante could arrive and take  
That step Sordello spurned, for the world's sake :  
He did much — but Sordello's chance was gone.  
Thus, had Sordello dared that step alone,  
Apollo had been compassed — 't was a fit  
He wished should go to him, not he to it  
— As one content to merely be supposed  
Singing or fighting elsewhere, while he dozed  
Really at home — one who was chiefly glad  
To have achieved the few real deeds he had,  
Because that way assured they were not worth  
Doing, so spared from doing them henceforth —  
A tree that covets fruitage and yet tastes  
Never itself, itself: had he embraced  
Their cause then, men had plucked Hesperian fruit  
And, praising that, just thrown him in to boot  
All he was anxious to appear, but scarce  
Solicitous to be. A sorry farce  
Such life is, after all ! cannot I say  
He lived for some one better thing ? this way. —  
Lo, on a heathy brown and nameless hill  
By sparkling Asolo, in mist and chill,

Morning just up, higher and higher runs  
 A child barefoot and rosy. She ! the sun 's  
 On the square castle's inner-court's low wall  
 Like the chine of some extinct animal  
 Half turned to earth and flowers ; and through the  
 haze

(Save where some slender patches of gray maize  
 Are to be overleaped) that boy has crost  
 The whole hill-side of dew and powder-frost  
 Matting the balm and mountain camomile.

Up and up goes he, singing all the while  
 Some unintelligible words to beat  
 The lark, God's poet, swooning at his feet,  
 So worsted is he at "the few fine locks  
 Stained like pale honey oozed from topmost rocks  
 Sunblanched the livelong summer," — all that 's left  
 Of the Goito lay ! And thus bereft,  
Sleep and forget, Sordello ! In effect

He sleeps, the feverish poet — I suspect  
 Not utterly companionless ; but, friends,  
 Wake up ; the ghost 's gone, and the story ends  
 I'd fain hope, sweetly — seeing, peri or ghoul,  
 That spirits are conjectured fair or foul,  
 Evil or good, judicious authors think,  
 According as they vanish in a stink  
 Or in a perfume. Friends, be frank ! ye snuff  
 Civet, I warrant. Really ? Like enough !  
 Merely the savour's rareness ; any nose  
 May ravage with impunity a rose :



Rifle a musk-pod and 't will ache like yours!  
I'd tell you that same pungency insures  
An after-gust — but that were overbold.  
Who would has heard Sordello's story told.

# STRAFFORD.

A TRAGEDY.



Dedicated,

IN ALL AFFECTIONATE ADMIRATION,

TO

WILLIAM C. MACREADY.

APRIL 23, 1837.

## PERSONS.

CHARLES I.

Earl of HOLLAND.

Lord SAVILE.

Sir HENRY VANE.

WENTWORTH, Viscount WENTWORTH, Earl of STRAFFORD.

JOHN PYM.

JOHN HAMPDEN.

The younger VANE.

DENZIL HOLLIS.

BENJAMIN RUDYARD.

NATHANIEL FIENNES.

Earl of LOUDON.

MAXWELL, Usher of the Black Rod.

BALFOUR, Constable of the Tower.

A Puritan.

Queen HENRIETTA.

LUCY PERCY, Countess of Carlisle.

Presbyterians, Scots Commissioners, Adherents of Strafford,  
Secretaries, Officers of the Court, etc. Two of Strafford's  
Children.

# STRAFFORD.

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## ACT I.

SCENE I. *A House near Whitehall.* — HAMPDEN, HOLLIS, the younger VANE, RUDYARD, FIENNES, and many of the Presbyterian Party: LOUDON and other Scots Commissioners.

*Vane.* I say, if he be here —

*Rud.* (And he is here!) —

*Hol.* For England's sake let every man be still  
Nor speak of him, so much as say his name,  
Till Pym rejoin us! Rudyard! Henry Vane!  
One rash conclusion may decide our course  
And with it England's fate — think — England's fate!  
Hampden, for England's sake they should be still!

*Vane.* You say so, Hollis? Well, I must be still!  
It is indeed too bitter that one man,  
Any one man's mere presence should suspend  
England's combined endeavor: little need  
To name him!

*Rud.* For you are his brother, Hollis!

*Hamp.* Shame on you, Rudyard! time to tell him that  
When he forgets the Mother of us all.

*Rud.* Do I forget her ?

*Hamp.* You talk idle hate

Against her foe : is that so strange a thing ?

Is hating Wentworth all the help she needs ?

*A Puritan.* The Philistine strode, cursing as he went :

But David — five smooth pebbles from the brook

Within his scrip . . .

*Rud.* Be you as still as David !

*Fien.* Here 's Rudyard not ashamed to wag a tongue  
Stiff with ten years' disuse of Parliaments ;

Why, when the last sat, Wentworth sat with us !

*Rud.* Let 's hope for news of them now he returns —  
He that was safe in Ireland, as we thought !

— But I 'll abide Pym's coming.

*Vane.* Now, by Heaven

They may be cool who can, silent who will —

Some have a gift that way ! Wentworth is here,  
Here, and the King 's safe closeted with him

Ere this. And when I think on all that 's past

Since that man left us, how his single arm

Rolled the advancing good of England back

And set the woful Past up in its place, —

Exalting Dagon where the Ark should be —

How that man has made firm the fickle King

(Hampden, I will speak out !) — in aught he feared

To venture on before ; taught Tyranny

Her dismal trade, the use of all her tools,

To ply the scourge yet screw the gag so close

That strangled agony bleeds mute to death —  
How he turns Ireland to a private stage  
For training infant villanies, new ways  
Of wringing treasure out of tears and blood,  
Unheard oppressions nourished in the dark  
To try how much man's nature can endure  
— If he dies under it, what harm? if not,  
Why, one more trick is added to the rest  
Worth a king's knowing, and what Ireland bears  
England may learn to bear: how all this while  
That man has set himself to one dear task,  
The bringing Charles to relish more and more  
Power, power without law, power and blood too —  
— Can I be still?

*Hamp.* For that you should be still.

*Vane.* O Hampden, then and now! The year he  
left us,

The People in full Parliament could wrest  
The Bill of Rights from the reluctant King;  
And now, he 'll find in an obscure small room  
A stealthy gathering of great-hearted men  
That take up England's cause: England is here!

*Hamp.* And who despairs of England?

*Rud.* That do I,

If Wentworth comes to rule her. I am sick  
To think her wretched masters, Hamilton,  
The muckworm Cottington, the maniac Laud,  
May yet be longed-for back again. I say,  
I do despair.

*Vane.* And, Rudyard, I'll say this —  
 Which all true men say after me, not loud  
 But solemnly and as you'd say a prayer !  
 This King, who treads our England under foot,  
 Has just so much — it may be fear or craft —  
 As bids him pause at each fresh outrage ; friends,  
 He needs some sterner hand to grasp his own,  
 Some voice to ask, " Why shrink ? — am I not by ? "  
 Now, one whom England loved for serving her,  
 Found in his heart to say, " I know where best  
 The iron heel shall bruise her, for she leans  
 Upon me when you trample." Witness, you !  
 So Wentworth heartened Charles, and England fell.  
 But inasmuch as life is hard to take  
 From England . . .

*Many Voices.* Go on, Vane ! 'T is well said, Vane !

*Vane.* — Who has not so forgotten Runnymead ! —

*Voices.* 'T is well and bravely spoken, Vane ! Go on !

*Vane.* There are some little signs of late she knows  
 The ground no place for her ! She glances round,  
 Wentworth has dropped the hand, is gone his way  
 On other service : what if she arise ?  
 No ! the King beckons, and beside him stands  
 The same bad man once more, with the same smile  
 And the same gesture. Now shall England crouch,  
 Or catch at us and rise ?

*Voices.* The Renegade !

Haman ! Ahithophel !

*Hamp.* Gentlemen of the North,

It was not thus, the night your claims were urged,  
 And we pronounced the League and Covenant  
 The cause of Scotland, England's cause as well !  
 Vane there, sat motionless the whole night through.

*Vane.* Hampden.

*Fien.* Stay, Vane !

*Lou.* Be just and patient, Vane !

*Vane.* Mind how you counsel patience, Loudon ! you  
 Have still a Parliament, and this your League  
 To back it ; you are free in Scotland still :  
 While we are brothers, hope 's for England yet.  
 But know you wherefore Wentworth comes ? to quench  
 This last of hopes ? that he brings war with him ?  
 Know you the man's self ? what he dares ?

*Lou.* We know,  
 All know — 't is nothing new.

*Vane.* And what 's new, then,  
 In calling for his life ? Why, Pym himself —  
 You must have heard — ere Wentworth dropped our  
 cause

He would see Pym first ; there were many more  
 Strong on the people's side and friends of his,  
 Eliot that 's dead, Rudyard and Hampden here,  
 But for these Wentworth cared not ; only, Pym  
 He would see — Pym and he were sworn, 't is said,  
 To live and die together ; so, they met  
 At Greenwich. Wentworth, you are sure, was long,  
 Specious enough, the Devil's argument  
 Lost nothing on his lips ; he 'd have Pym own

A patriot could not play a purer part  
 Than follow in his track ; they two combined  
 Might put down England. Well, Pym heard him out ;  
 One glance — you know Pym's eye — one word was all :  
 " You leave us, Wentworth ! while your head is on,  
 I'll not leave you."

*Hamp.* Has he left Wentworth, then ?  
 Has England lost him ? Will you let him speak,  
 Or put your crude surmises in his mouth ?  
 Away with this ! Will you have Pym or Vane ?

*Voices.* Wait Pym's arrival ! Pym shall speak.

*Hamp.* Meanwhile  
 Let Loudon read the Parliament's report  
 From Edinburgh : our last hope, as Vane says,  
 Is in the stand it makes. Loudon !

*Vane.* No, no !  
 Silent I can be : not indifferent !

*Hamp.* Then each keep silence, praying God to spare  
 His anger, cast not England quite away  
 In this her visitation !

*A Puritan.* Seven years long  
 The Midianite drove Israel into dens  
 And caves. Till God sent forth a mighty man,

*PYM enters.*  
 Even Gideon !

*Pym.* Wentworth 's come : nor sickness, care,  
 The ravaged body nor the ruined soul,  
 More than the winds and waves that beat his ship,  
 Could keep him from the King. He has not reached

Whitehall : they 've hurried up a Council there  
 To lose no time and find him work enough.  
 Where 's Loudon ? your Scots' Parliament . . .

*Lou.*

Holds firm :

We were about to read reports.

*Pym.*

The King

Has just dissolved your Parliament.

*Lou. and other Scots.*

Great God !

An oath-breaker ! Stand by us, England, then !

*Pym.* The King 's too sanguine ; doubtless Wentworth 's here ;

But still some little form might be kept up.

*Hamp.* Now speak, Vane ! Rudyard, you had much to say !

*Hol.* The rumor 's false, then . . .

*Pym.* Ay, the Court gives out

His own concerns have brought him back : I know

'T is the King calls him : Wentworth supersedes

The tribe of Cottingtons and Hamiltons

Whose part is played ; there 's talk enough, by this, —

Merciful talk, the King thinks : time is now

To turn the record's last and bloody leaf

That, chronicling a nation's great despair,

Tells they were long rebellious, and their lord

Indulgent, till, all kind expedients tried,

He drew the sword on them and reigned in peace.

Laud's laying his religion on the Scots

Was the last gentle entry : the new page

Shall run, the King thinks, "Wentworth thrust it down

At the sword's point."

*A Puritan.* I'll do your bidding, Pym,  
England's and God's — one blow!

*Pym.* A goodly thing —  
We all say, friends, it is a goodly thing  
To right that England! Heaven grows dark above :  
Let's snatch one moment ere the thunder fall,  
To say how well the English spirit comes out  
Beneath it! All have done their best, indeed,  
From lion Eliot, that grand Englishman,  
To the least here : and who, the least one here,  
When she is saved (for her redemption dawns,  
Dimly, most dimly, but it dawns — it dawns)  
Who'd give at any price his hope away  
Of being named along with the Great Men ?  
We would not — no, we would not give that up !

*Hamp.* And one name shall be dearer than all names.  
When children, yet unborn, are taught that name  
After their fathers', — taught what matchless man . . .

*Pym.* . . . Saved England ! What if Wentworth's  
should be still  
That name ?

*Rud. and others.* We have just said it, Pym ! His  
death  
Saves her ! We said it — there's no way beside !  
I'll do God's bidding, Pym ! They struck down Joab  
And purged the land.

*Vane.* No villainous striking-down !

*Rud.* No, a calm vengeance : let the whole land rise

And shout for it. No Feltons !

*Pym.* Rudyard, no !

England rejects all Feltons ; most of all  
Since Wentworth . . . Hampden, say the trust again  
Of England in her servants — but I 'll think  
You know me, all of you. Then, I believe,  
Spite of the Past, Wentworth rejoins you, friends !

*Vane and others.* Wentworth ? apostate ! Judas !  
double-dyed

A traitor ! Is it Pym, indeed . . .

*Pym.* . . . Who says

Vane never knew that Wentworth, loved that man,  
Was used to stroll with him, arm locked in arm,  
Along the streets to see the people pass  
And read in every island-countenance  
Fresh argument for God against the King, —  
Never sat down, say, in the very house  
Where Eliot's brow grew broad with noble thoughts,  
(You 've joined us, Hampden — Hollis, you as well,)  
And then left talking over Gracchus' death . . .

*Vane.* To frame, we know it well, the choicest clause  
In the Petition of Rights : he framed such clause  
One month before he took at the King's hand  
His Northern Presidency, which that Bill  
Denounced.

*Pym.* Too true ! Never more, never more  
Walked we together ! Most alone I went.  
I have had friends — all here are fast my friends —  
But I shall never quite forget that friend.

And yet it could not but be real in him !  
You, Vane,— you Rudyard, have no right to trust  
To Wentworth : but can no one hope with me ?  
Hampden, will Wentworth dare shed English blood  
Like water ?

*Hamp.* Ireland is Aceldama.

*Pym.* Will he turn Scotland to a hunting-ground  
To please the King, now that he knows the King ?  
The People or the King ? and that King, Charles !

*Hamp.* Pym, all here know you : you 'll not set  
your heart

On any baseless dream. But say one deed  
Of Wentworth's, since he left us . . . [ *Shouting without.*

*Vane.* There ! he comes,  
And they shout for him ! Wentworth 's at Whitehall,  
The King embracing him, now, as we speak,  
And he, to be his match in courtesies,  
Taking the whole war's risk upon himself,  
Now, while you tell us here how changed he is !  
Hear you ?

*Pym.* And yet if 't is a dream, no more,  
That Wentworth chose their side, and brought the  
King

To love it as though Laud had loved it first,  
And the Queen after ; — that he led their cause  
Calm to success, and kept it spotless through,  
So that our very eyes could look upon  
The travail of our souls and close content  
That violence, which something mars even right

Which sanctions it, had taken off no grace  
From its serene regard. Only a dream !

*Hamp.* We meet here to accomplish certain good  
By obvious means, and keep tradition up  
Of free assemblages, else obsolete,  
In this poor chamber: nor without effect  
Has friend met friend to counsel and confirm,  
As, listening to the beats of England's heart,  
We spoke its wants to Scotland's prompt reply  
By these her delegates. Remains alone  
That word grow deed, as with God's help it shall —  
But with the Devil's hindrance, who doubts too ?  
Looked we or no that tyranny should turn  
Her engines of oppression to their use ?  
Whereof, suppose the worst be Wentworth here —  
Shall we break off the tactics which succeed  
In drawing out our formidablest foe,  
Let bickering and disunion take their place ?  
Or count his presence as our conquest's proof,  
And keep the old arms at their steady play ?  
Proceed to England's work ! Fiennes, read the list !

*Fiennes.* Ship-money is refused or fiercely paid  
In every county, save the northern parts  
Where Wentworth's influence . . . (*shouting.*)

*Vane.* I, in England's name,  
Declare her work, this way, at end ! Till now,  
Up to this moment, peaceful strife was best.  
We English had free leave to think ; till now,  
We had a shadow of a Parliament

In Scotland. But all 's changed : they change the first,  
They try brute-force for law, they first of all . . .

*Voices.* Good ! Talk enough ! The old true hearts  
with Vane !

*Vane.* Till we crush Wentworth for her, there 's no  
act

Serves England !

*Voices.* Vane for England !

*Pym.* Pym should be  
Something to England. I seek Wentworth, friends.

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SCENE II.—*Whitehall.*

Lady CARLISLE and WENTWORTH.

*Went.* And the King ?

*Lady Car.* Wentworth, lean on me ! sit then,—  
I 'll tell you all ; this horrible fatigue  
Will kill you.

*Went.* No ; or — Lucy, just your arm ;  
I 'll not sit till I 've cleared this up with him :  
After that, rest. The King ?

*Lady Car.* Confides in you.

*Went.* Why ? or, why now ? — They have kind  
throats, the knaves !

Shout for me — they !

*Lady Car.* You come so strangely soon :  
Yet we took measures to keep off the crowd —  
Did they shout for you ?

*Went.* Wherefore should they not ?  
 Does the King take such measures for himself ?  
 Beside, there 's such a dearth of malecontents,  
 You say !

*Lady Car.* I said but few dared carp at you.  
*Went.* At me ? at us, I hope ! The King and I !  
 He 's surely not disposed to let me bear  
 The fame away from him of these late deeds  
 In Ireland ? I am yet his instrument  
 Be it for well or ill ? He trusts me, too !

*Lady Car.* The King, dear Wentworth, purposes, I  
 said,  
 To grant you, in the face of all the Court . . .

*Went.* All the Court ! Evermore the Court about us !  
 Savile and Holland, Hamilton and Vane  
 About us, — then the King will grant me — what ?  
 That he for once put these aside and say —  
 “ Tell me your whole mind, Wentworth ! ”

*Lady Car.* You professed  
 You would be calm.

*Went.* Lucy, and I am calm !  
 How else shall I do all I come to do,  
 Broken, as you may see, body and mind,  
 How shall I serve the King ? time wastes meanwhile,  
 You have not told me half. His footstep ! No.  
 Quick, then, before I meet him, — I am calm —  
 Why does the King distrust me ?

*Lady Car.* He does not  
 Distrust you.

*Went.* Lucy, you can help me ; you  
Have even seemed to care for me : one word !  
Is it the Queen ?

*Lady Car.* No, not the Queen : the party  
That poisons the Queen's ear, Savile and Holland.

*Went.* I know, I know : and Vane, too, he 's one too ?  
Go on — and he 's made Secretary. Well ?  
Or leave them out and go straight to the charge ;  
The charge !

*Lady Car.* O, there 's no charge, no precise charge ;  
Only they sneer, make light of — one may say,  
Nibble at what you do.

*Went.* I know ! but Lucy,  
I reckoned on you from the first ! — Go on !  
— Was sure could I once see this gentle friend  
When I arrived, she 'd throw an hour away  
To help her . . . what am I ?

*Lady Car.* You thought of me,  
Dear Wentworth ?

*Went.* But go on ! The party here !

*Lady Car.* They do not think your Irish Government  
Of that surpassing value . . .

*Went.* The one thing  
Of value ! The one service that the crown  
May count on ! All that keeps these very Vanes  
In power, to vex me — not that they do vex,  
Only it might vex some to hear that service  
Decried, the sole support that 's left the King !

*Lady Car.* So the Archbishop says.

*Went.*

Ah? well, perhaps

The only hand held up in my defence  
May be old Laud's! These Hollands, then, these  
Saviles

Nibble? They nibble? — that's the very word!

*Lady Car.* Your profit in the Customs, Bristol says,  
Exceeds the due proportion: while the tax . . .

*Went.* Enough! 't is too unworthy, — I am not  
So patient as I thought! What's Pym about?

*Lady Car.* Pym?

*Went.* Pym and the People.

*Lady Car.* O, the Faction!  
Extinct — of no account: there 'll never be  
Another Parliament.

*Went.* Tell Savile that!  
You may know — (ay, you do — the creatures here  
Never forget!) that in my earliest life  
I was not . . . much that I am now! The King  
May take my word on points concerning Pym  
Before Lord Savile's, Lucy, or if not,  
I bid them ruin' their wise selves, not me,  
These Vanes and Hollands! I 'll not be their tool  
Who might be Pym's friend yet.

But there 's the King

Where is he?

*Lady Car.* Just apprised that you arrive.

*Went.* And why not here to meet me? I was told  
He sent for me, nay, longed for me!

*Lady Car.*

Because, —

He is now . . . I think a Council 's sitting now  
About this Scots affair.

*Went.*                           A Council sits ?

They have not taken a decided course  
Without me in the matter ?

*Lady Car.*                           I should say . . .

*Went.* The war ? They cannot have agreed to that ?  
Not the Scots' war ? — without consulting me —  
Me, that am here to show how rash it is,  
How easy to dispense with ? — Ah, you too  
Against me ! well, — the King may take his time.  
— Forget it, Lucy ! cares make peevish : mine  
Weigh me (but 't is a secret) to my grave.

*Lady Car.* For life or death I am your own, dear  
friend !                                                   [ *Goes out.*

*Went.* Heartless ! but all are heartless here. Go  
now,

Forsake the People ! — I did not forsake  
The People : they shall know it — when the King  
Will trust me ! — who trusts all beside at once,  
While I have not spoke Vane and Savile fair,  
And am not trusted : have but saved the Throne :  
Have not picked up the Queen's glove prettily,  
And am not trusted. But he 'll see me now.  
Weston is dead : the Queen 's half English now —  
More English : one decisive word will brush  
These insects from . . . the step I know so well !  
The King ! But now, to tell him . . . no — to ask  
What 's in me he distrusts : — or, best begin

By proving that this frightful Scots affair  
 Is just what I foretold. So much to say,  
 And the flesh fails, now ! and the time is come,  
 And one false step no way to be repaired !  
 You were avenged, Pym, could you look on me !

*Pym enters.*

*Went.* I little thought of you just then.

*Pym.* No ? I

Think always of you, Wentworth.

*Went.* The old voice !

I wait the King, sir.

*Pym.* True — you look so pale !

A Council sits within ; when that breaks up  
 He 'll see you.

*Went.* Sir, I thank you.

*Pym.* O, thank Laud !

You know when Laud once gets on Church affairs  
 The case is desperate : he 'll not be long  
 To-day : he only means to prove, to-day,  
 We English all are mad to have a hand  
 In butchering the Scots for serving God  
 After their fathers' fashion : only that !

*Went.* Sir, keep your jests for those who relish them  
 (Does *he* enjoy their confidence ?) 'T is kind  
 To tell me what the Council does.

*Pym.* You grudge

That I should know it had resolved on war  
 Before you came ? no need : you shall have all  
 The credit, trust me.

*Pym.* — Since we two met  
At Greenwich? Yes: poor patriots though we be,  
You cut a figure, makes some slight return  
For your exploits in Ireland! Changed indeed,  
Could our friend Eliot look from out his grave!  
Ah, Wentworth, one thing for acquaintance' sake,  
Just to decide a question; have you, now,  
Felt your old self since you forsook us?

*Went.* Sir !

*Pym.* Spare me the gesture! you misapprehend! Think not I mean the advantage is with me. I was about to say that, for my part, I never quite held up my head since then,— Was quite myself since then: for first, you see, I lost all credit after that event With those who recollect how sure I was Wentworth would outdo Eliot on our side. Forgive me: Savile, old Vane, Holland here, Eschew plain-speaking: 't is a trick I keep.

*Went. How, when, where, Savile, Vane and Holland  
speak,*  
Plainly or otherwise, would have my scorn,  
All of my scorn, sir . . .

*Pym.* . . . Did not my poor thoughts  
Claim somewhat?

*Went.* Keep your thoughts! believe the King

Mistrusts me for their prattle, all these Vanes  
 And Saviles! make your mind up, o' God's love,  
 That I am discontented with the King!

*Pym.* Why, you may be: I should be, that I know,  
 Were I like you.

*Went.* Like me?

*Pym.* I care not much  
 For titles: our friend Eliot died no Lord,  
 Hampden 's no Lord, and Savile is a Lord:  
 But you care, since you sold your soul for one.  
 I can't think, therefore, your soul's purchaser  
 Did well to laugh you to such utter scorn  
 When you twice prayed so humbly for its price,  
 The thirty silver pieces . . . I should say,  
 The Earldom you expected, still expect,  
 And may. Your letters were the movingest!  
 Console yourself: I 've borne him prayers just now  
 From Scotland not to be oppressed by Laud,  
 Words moving in their way: he 'll pay, be sure,  
 As much attention as to those you sent.

*Went.* False, sir!—Who showed them you? suppose it so,  
 The King did very well . . . nay, I was glad  
 When it was shown me: I refused, the first!  
 John Pym, you were my friend — forbear me once!

*Pym.* O Wentworth, ancient brother of my soul,  
 That all should come to this!

*Went.* Leave me!

*Pym.* My friend,

Why should I leave you?

*Went.* To tell Rudyard this,  
And Hampden this!

*Pym.* Whose faces once were bright  
At my approach — now sad with doubt and fear,  
Because I hope in you — yes, Wentworth, you  
Who never mean to ruin England — you  
Who shake off, with God's help, an obscene dream  
In this Ezekiel chamber, where it crept  
Upon you first, and wake, yourself — your true  
And proper self, our Leader, England's Chief,  
And Hampden's friend!

This is the proudest day !  
Come Wentworth ! Do not even see the King !  
The rough old room will seem itself again !  
We 'll both go in together : you 've not seen  
Hampden so long : come : and there 's Fiennes : you 'll  
have

To know young Vane. This is the proudest day !

[*The KING enters.* WENTWORTH lets fall PYM's hand.

*Cha.* Arrived, my Lord ? — This gentleman, we know,  
Was your old friend.

The Scots shall be informed  
What we determine for their happiness.

You have made haste, my Lord.

[PYM goes out.

*Went.* Sir, I am come . . .

*Cha.* To see an old familiar — nay, 't is well ;  
Aid us with his experience : this Scots' League

And Covenant spreads too far, and we have proofs  
 That they intrigue with France: the Faction, too,  
 Whereof your friend there is the head and front,  
 Abets them,—as he boasted, very like.

*Went.* Sir, trust me! but for this once, trust me,  
 sir!

*Cha.* What can you mean?

*Went.* That you should trust me, sir!

O—not for my sake! but 't is sad, so sad  
 That for distrusting me, you suffer—you  
 Whom I would die to serve: sir, do you think  
 That I would die to serve you?

*Cha.* But rise, Wentworth!

*Went.* What shall convince you? What does  
 Savile do

To prove him... Ah, one can't tear out one's heart  
 And show it, how sincere a thing it is!

*Cha.* Have I not trusted you?

*Went.* Say aught but that!

There is my comfort, mark you: all will be  
 So different when you trust me—as you shall!  
 It has not been your fault,—I was away,  
 Mistook, maligned, how was the King to know?  
 I am here, now—he means to trust me, now—  
 All will go on so well!

*Cha.* Be sure I do—

I've heard that I should trust you: as you came,  
 Your friend, the Countess, told me...

*Went.* No,—hear nothing—

Be told nothing about me ! you 're not told  
Your right-hand serves you, or your children love you !

*Cha.* You love me, Wentworth : rise !

*Went.* I can speak now.

I have no right to hide the truth. 'T is I  
Can save you ; only I. Sir, what must be ?

*Cha.* Since Laud 's assured (the minutes are within)  
— Loath as I am to spill my subjects' blood . . .

*Went.* That is, he 'll have a war : what 's done is done !

*Cha.* They have intrigued with France ; that 's clear  
to Laud.

*Went.* Has Laud suggested any way to meet  
The war 's expense ?

*Cha.* He 'd not decide so far  
Until you joined us.

*Went.* Most considerate !  
He 's certain they intrigue with France, these Scots ?  
The People would be with us.

*Cha.* Pym should know.  
*Went.* The People for us — were the People for us !  
Sir, a great thought comes to reward your trust :  
Summon a Parliament ! in Ireland first,  
Then, here.

*Cha.* In truth ?

*Went.* That saves us ! that puts off  
The war, gives time to right their grievances —  
To talk with Pym. I know the Faction, as  
Laud styles it, tutors Scotland : all their plans  
Suppose no Parliament : in calling one

You take them by surprise. Produce the proofs  
 Of Scotland's treason; then bid England help:  
 Even Pym will not refuse.

*Cha.* You would begin  
 With Ireland?

*Went.* Take no care for that: that's sure  
 To prosper.

*Cha.* You shall rule me. You were best  
 Return at once: but take this ere you go!  
 Now, do I trust you? You're an Earl: my Friend  
 Of Friends: yes, while . . . You hear me not!

*Went.* Say it all o'er again — but once again:  
 The first was for the music — once again!

*Cha.* Strafford, my friend, there may have been re-  
 ports,  
 Vain rumors. Henceforth touching Strafford is  
 To touch the apple of my sight: why gaze  
 So earnestly?

*Went.* I am grown young again,  
 And foolish. What was it we spoke of?

*Cha.* Ireland,  
 The Parliament, —

*Went.* I may go when I will?  
 — Now?

*Cha.* Are you tired so soon of us?

*Went.* My King!  
 But you will not so utterly abhor  
 A Parliament? I'd serve you any way.

*Cha.* You said just now this was the only way.

*Went. Sir, I will serve you!*

This Parliament —

We 'll summon it, the English one — I 'll care  
For everything. You shall not need them much.

*Cha.* If they prove restive . . .

Went. · I shall be with you.

*Cha.* Ere they assemble?

*Went.* I will come, or else  
Deposit this infirm humanity  
I' the dust. My whole heart stays with you, my King!

[As WENTWORTH goes out, the QUEEN enters.]

*Cha.* That man must love me!

*Queen.* Is it over then?

Why, he looks yellower than ever! well,

At least we shall not hear eternally

Of service — services: he 's paid at least.

*Cha.* Not done with: he engages to surpass  
All yet performed in Ireland.

*Queen.* I had thought  
Nothing beyond was ever to be done.

The war, Charles — will he raise supplies enough?

*Cha.* We've hit on an expedient; he . . . that is, I have advised . . . we have decided on The calling — in Ireland — of a Parliament.

*Queen.* O truly! You agree to that? Is that

The first fruit of his counsel ? But I guessed  
As much.

*Cha.* This is too idle, Henriette !  
I should know best. He will strain every nerve,  
And once a precedent established . . .

*Queen.* Notice  
How sure he is of a long term of favors !  
He 'll see the next, and the next after that ;  
No end to Parliaments !

*Cha.* Well, it is done.  
He talks it smoothly, doubtless. If, indeed,  
The Commons here . . .

*Queen.* Here ! you will summon them  
Here ? Would I were in France again to see  
A King !

*Cha.* But Henriette . . .

*Queen.* O, the Scots see clear ?  
Why should they bear your rule ?

*Cha.* But listen, Sweet !

*Queen.* Let Wentworth listen — you confide in him !

*Cha.* I do not, Love — I do not so confide ?  
The Parliament shall never trouble us  
. . Nay, hear me ! I have schemes, such schemes : we 'll  
buy

The leaders off : without that, Wentworth's counsel  
Had ne'er prevailed on me. Perhaps I call it  
To have excuse for breaking it forever,  
And whose will then the blame be ? See you not ?  
Come, Dearest ! — look ! the little fairy, now,  
That cannot reach my shoulder ! Dearest, come !

## ACT II.

SCENE I.—(As in Act I. Scene I.)

*The same Party enters.**Rud.* Twelve subsidies !*Vane.* O Rudyard, do not laugh  
At least !*Rud.* True : Strafford called the Parliament —  
'T is he should laugh !*A Puritan.* Out of the serpent's root  
Comes forth a cockatrice.*Fien.* — A stinging one,  
If that's the Parliament : twelve subsidies !  
A stinging one ! but, brother, where's your word  
For Strafford's other nest-egg, the Scots' war ?*The Puritan.* His fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent.*Fien.* Shall be ? It chips the shell, man ; peeps  
abroad.Twelve subsidies ! — Why, how now, *Vane* ?*Rud.* Peace, *Fiennes* !*Fien.* Ah ? — But he was not more a dupe than I,  
Or you, or any here, the day that *Pym*  
Returned with the good news. Look up, friend *Vane* !  
We all believed that Strafford meant us well  
In summoning the Parliament.*HAMPDEN enters.**Vane.* Now, *Hampden*,

Clear me ! I would have leave to sleep again ;  
 I'd look the People in the face again :  
 Clear me from having, from the first, hoped, dreamed  
 Better of Strafford !

*Hamp.*                    You may grow one day  
 A steadfast light to England, Henry Vane !

*Rud.* Meantime, by flashes I make shift to see  
 Strafford revived our Parliaments ; before,  
 War was but talked of ; there 's an army, now :  
 Still, we 've a Parliament ! Poor Ireland bears  
 Another wrench (she dies the hardest death !)  
 Why, speak of it in Parliament ! and, lo,  
 'T is spoken ! so console yourselves.

*Fien.*                    The jest !  
 We clamored, I suppose, thus long, to win  
 The privilege of laying on our backs  
 A sorer burden than the King dares lay !

*Rud.* Mark now : we meet at length, complaints pour  
 in  
 From every county, all the land cries out  
 On loans and levies, curses ship-money,  
 Calls vengeance on the Star-chamber ; we lend  
 An ear. "Ay, lend them all the ears you have !"  
 Puts in the King ; "my subjects, as you find,  
 Are fretful, and conceive great things of you.  
 Just listen to them, friends ; you 'll sanction me  
 The measures they most wince at, make them yours,  
 Instead of mine, I know : and, to begin,  
 They say my levies pinch them, — raise me straight

Twelve subsidies ! ”

*Fien.* All England cannot furnish  
Twelve subsidies !

*Hol.* But Strafford, just returned  
From Ireland — what has he to do with that ?  
How could he speak his mind ? He left before  
The Parliament assembled. Pym, who knows  
Strafford . . .

*Rud.* Would I were sure we know ourselves !  
What is for good, what, bad — who friend, who foe !

*Hol.* Do you count Parliaments no gain ?

*Rud.* A gain ?  
While the King’s creatures overbalance us ?  
— There’s going on, beside, among ourselves  
A quiet, slow, but most effectual course  
Of buying over, sapping, leavening  
The lump till all is leaven. Glanville’s gone.  
I’ll put a case ; had not the Court declared  
That no sum short of just twelve subsidies  
Will be accepted by the King — our House,  
I say, would have consented to that offer  
To let us buy off ship-money !

*Hol.* Most like,  
If, say, six subsidies will buy it off,  
The House . . .

*Rud.* Will grant them ! Hampden, do you hear ?  
Congratulate with me ! the King’s the king,  
And gains his point at last — our own assent  
To that detested tax ! all’s over, then !

There's no more taking refuge in this room,  
 Protesting, "Let the King do what he will,  
 We, England, are no party to our shame :  
 Our day will come!" Congratulate with me !

*Pym enters.*

*Vane.* Pym, Strafford called this Parliament, you say,  
 But we'll not have our Parliaments like those  
 In Ireland, Pym !

*Rud.* Let him stand forth, your friend !  
 One doubtful act hides far too many sins ;  
 It can be stretched no more, and, to my mind,  
 Begins to drop from those it covered.

*Other Voices.* Good !  
 Let him avow himself ! No fitter time !  
 We wait thus long for you.

*Rud.* Perhaps, too long !  
 Since nothing but the madness of the Court,  
 In thus unmasking its designs at once,  
 Has saved us from betraying England. Stay —  
 This Parliament is Strafford's : let us vote  
 Our list of grievances too black by far  
 To suffer talk of subsidies : or best,  
 That ship-money's disposed of long ago  
 By England : any vote that's broad enough :  
 And then let Strafford, for the love of it,  
 Support his Parliament !

*Vane.* And vote as well  
 No war's to be with Scotland ! Hear you, Pym ?  
 We'll vote, no war ! No part nor lot in it

For England !

*Many Voices.* Vote, no war ! Stop the new levies !  
No Bishop's war ! At once ! When next we meet !

*Pym.* Much more when next we meet ! Friends,  
which of you

Since first the course of Strafford was in doubt,  
Has fallen the most away in soul from me ?

*Vane.* I sat apart, even now, under God's eye,  
Pondering the words that should denounce you, Pym,  
In presence of us all, as one at league  
With England's enemy.

*Pym.* You are a good  
And gallant spirit, Henry. Take my hand  
And say you pardon me for all the pain  
Till now ! Strafford is wholly ours.

*Many Voices.* Sure ? sure ?

*Pym.* Most sure : for Charles dissolves the Par-  
liament

While I speak here.

— And I must speak, friends, now !

Strafford is ours. The King detects the change,  
Casts Strafford off forever, and resumes  
His ancient path : no Parliament for us,  
No Strafford for the King !

Come, all of you,  
To bid the King farewell, predict success  
To his Scots' expedition, and receive  
Strafford, our comrade now. The next will be  
Indeed a Parliament !

*Vane.* Forgive me, Pym !

*Voices.* This looks like truth : Strafford can have,  
indeed,

No choice.

*Pym.* Friends, follow me ! He 's with the King.  
Come, Hampden, and come, Rudyard, and come, Vane !  
This is no sullen day for England, sirs !  
Strafford shall tell you !

*Voices.* To Whitehall then ! Come !

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SCENE II.—*Whitehall.*

CHARLES and STRAFFORD.

*Cha.* Strafford !

*Straf.* Is it a dream ? my papers, here —  
Thus, as I left them, all the plans you found  
So happy — (look ! the track you pressed my hand  
For pointing out) — and in this very room,  
Over these very plans, you tell me, sir,  
With the same face, too, — tell me just one thing  
That ruins them ! How 's this ? What may this mean ?  
Sir, who has done this ?

*Cha.* Strafford, who but I ?

You bade me put the rest away : indeed  
You are alone.

*Straf.* Alone, and like to be !  
No fear, when some unworthy scheme 's grown ripe,

Of those, who hatched it, leaving me to loose  
 The mischief on the world ! Laud hatches war,  
 Falls to his prayers, and leaves the rest to me,  
 And I 'm 'alone.

*Cha.* At least, you knew as much  
 When first you undertook the war.

*Straf.* My liege,  
 Was this the way ? I said, since Laud would lap  
 A little blood, 't were best to hurry over  
 The loathsome business, not to be whole months  
 At slaughter — one blow, only one, then, peace,  
 Save for the dreams. I said, to please you both  
 I 'd lead an Irish army to the West,  
 While in the South an English . . . but you look  
 As though you had not told me fifty times  
 'T was a brave plan ! My army is all raised,  
 I am prepared to join it . . .

*Cha.* Hear me, Strafford !

*Straf.* . . . When, for some little thing, my whole  
 design

Is set aside — (where is the wretched paper ?)  
 I am to lead — (ay, here it is) — to lead  
 The English army : why ? Northumberland  
 That I appointed, chooses to be sick —  
 Is frightened : and, meanwhile, who answers for  
 The Irish Parliament ? or army, either ?  
 Is this my plan ?

*Cha.* So disrespectful, sir ?

*Straf.* My liege, do not believe it ! I am yours,

Yours ever: 't is too late to think about:  
To the death, yours. Elsewhere, this untoward step  
Shall pass for mine; the world shall think it mine.  
But, here! But, here! I am so seldom here,  
Seldom with you, my King! I, soon to rush  
Alone upon a giant in the dark!

*Cha.* My Strafford!

*Straf.* [examines papers awhile.] "Seize the passes  
of the Tyne"!

But, sir, you see — see all I say is true?  
My plan was sure to prosper, so, no cause  
To ask the Parliament for help; whereas  
We need them frightfully.

*Cha.* Need the Parliament?

*Straf.* Now, for God's sake, sir, not one error more!  
We can afford no error; we draw, now,  
Upon our last resource: the Parliament  
Must help us!

*Cha.* I've undone you, Strafford!

*Straf.* Nay —

Nay — why despond, sir? 't is not come to that!  
I have not hurt you? Sir, what have I said  
To hurt you? I unsay it! Don't despond!  
Sir, do you turn from me?

*Cha.* My friend of friends!

*Straf.* We'll make a shift! Leave me the Parliament!  
Help they us ne'er so little and I'll make  
Sufficient out of it. We'll speak them fair.  
They're sitting, that's one great thing; that half gives

Their sanction to us ; that 's much : don't despond !  
 Why, let them keep their money, at the worst !  
 The reputation of the People's help  
 Is all we want : we 'll make shift yet !

*Cha.*

Good Strafford !

*Straf.* But meantime, let the sum be ne'er so small  
 They offer, we 'll accept it : any sum —  
 For the look of it : the least grant tells the Scots  
 The Parliament is ours — their stanch ally  
 Turned ours : that told, there 's half the blow to strike !  
 What will the grant be ? What does Glanville think ?

*Cha.* Alas !*Straf.* My liege ?*Cha.*

Strafford !

*Straf.*

But answer me !

Have they . . . O surely not refused us half ?  
 Half the twelve subsidies ? We never looked  
 For all of them ! How many do they give

*Cha.* You have not heard . . .

*Straf.* (What has he done ?) — Heard what ?  
 But speak at once, sir, this grows terrible !

[*The King continuing silent.*

You have dissolved them ! — I 'll not leave this man.

*Cha.* 'T was old Vane's ill-judged vehemence.*Straf.*

Old Vane ?

*Cha.* He told them, just about to vote the half,  
 That nothing short of all twelve subsidies  
 Would serve our turn, or be accepted.

*Straf.*

Vane !

Vane ! Who, sir, promised me that very Vane . . .  
 O God, to have it gone, quite gone from me,  
 The one last hope — I that despair, *my* hope —  
 That I should reach his heart one day, and cure  
 All bitterness one day, be proud again  
 And young again, care for the sunshine too,  
 And never think of Eliot any more, —  
 God, and to toil for this, go far for this,  
 Get nearer, and still nearer, reach this heart  
 And find Vane there !

*[Suddenly taking up a paper, and continuing with  
 a forced calmness.]*

Northumberland is sick :

Well then, I take the army : Wilmot leads  
 The Horse, and he with Conway must secure  
 The passes of the Tyne : Ormond supplies  
 My place in Ireland. Here, we 'll try the City :  
 If they refuse a loan — debase the coin  
 And seize the bullion ! we 've no other choice.  
 Herbert . . .

And this while I am here ! with you !  
 And there are hosts such, hosts like Vane ! I go,  
 And, I once gone, they 'll close around you, sir,  
 When the least pique, pettiest mistrust, is sure  
 To ruin me — and you along with me !  
 Do you see that ? And you along with me !  
 — Sir, you 'll not ever listen to these men,  
 And I away, fighting your battle ? Sir,  
 If they — if She — charge me, no matter how —

Say you, "At any time when he returns  
His head is mine!" Don't stop me there! You know  
My head is yours, but never stop me there!

*Cha.* Too shameful, Strafford! You advised the  
war,

And . . .

*Straf.* I! I! that was never spoken with  
Till it was entered on! That loathe the war!  
That say it is the maddest, wickedest . . .  
Do you know, sir, I think, within my heart,  
That you would say I did advise the war;  
And if, through your own weakness, or what's worse,  
These Scots, with God to help them, drive me back,  
You will not step between the raging People  
And me, to say . . .

I knew it! from the first  
I knew it! Never was so cold a heart!  
Remember that I said it—that I never  
Believed you for a moment!

— And, you loved me?

You thought your perfidy profoundly hid  
Because I could not share the whisperings  
With Vane? With Savile? What, the face was  
masked?

I had the heart to see, sir! Face of flesh,  
But heart of stone—of smooth, cold, frightful stone!  
Ay, call them! Shall I call for you? The Scots  
Goaded to madness? Or the English—Pym—  
Shall I call Pym, your subject? Oh, you think

I'll leave them in the dark about it all?  
 They shall not know you? Hampden, Pym shall not?

PYM, HAMPDEN, VANE, *etc. enter.*

[*Dropping on his knee.*] Thus favored with your gracious countenance

What shall a rebel League avail against  
 Your servant, utterly and ever yours?  
 So, gentlemen, the King's not even left  
 The privilege of bidding me farewell  
 Who haste to save the People—that you style  
 Your People—from the mercies of the Scots  
 And France their friend?

[*To CHARLES.*] Pym's grave gray eyes are fixed  
 Upon you, sir!

Your pleasure, gentlemen?

*Hamp.* The King dissolved us—'t is the King we seek

And not Lord Strafford.

*Straf.* — Strafford, guilty too  
 Of counselling the measure. [*To CHARLES.*] (Hush . . .  
 you know —

You have forgotten—sir, I counselled it)  
 A heinous matter, truly! But the King  
 Will yet see cause to thank me for a course  
 Which now, perchance . . . (Sir, tell them so!) — he  
 blames.

Well, choose some fitter time to make your charge:  
 I shall be with the Scots, you understand?  
 Then yelp at me!

Meanwhile, your Majesty  
Binds me, by this fresh token of your trust . . .

*[Under the pretence of an earnest farewell, STRAFFORD conducts CHARLES to the door, in such a manner as to hide his agitation from the rest: as the King disappears, they turn as by one impulse to PYM, who has not changed his original posture of surprise.]*

*Hamp.* Leave we this arrogant strong wicked man !

*Vane and others.* Hence, Pym ! Come out of this unworthy place

To our old room again ! He 's gone.

*[STRAFFORD, just about to follow the King, looks back.]*

*Pym.* Not gone !

*[To STRAFFORD.]* Keep tryst ! the old appointment 's made anew :

Forget not we shall meet again !

*Straf.* So be it !

And if an army follows me ?

*Vane.* His friends  
Will entertain your army !

*Pym.* I 'll not say  
You have misreckoned, Strafford : time shows. Perish,  
Body and spirit ! Fool to feign a doubt,  
Pretend the scrupulous and nice reserve  
Of one whose prowess should achieve the feat !  
What share have I in it ? Shall I affect  
To see no dismal sign above your head  
When God suspends his ruinous thunder there ?  
Strafford is doomed. Touch him no one of you !

*[PYM, HAMPDEN, etc. go out.]*

*Straf.* Pym, we shall meet again !

Lady CARLISLE enters.

You here, child ?

*Lady Car.*

Hush —

I know it all : hush, Strafford !

*Straf.* Ah ? you know ?

Well. I shall make a sorry soldier, Lucy !

All knights begin their enterprise, we read,

Under the best of auspices ; 't is morn,

The Lady girds his sword upon the Youth

(He 's always very young) — the trumpets sound,

Cups pledge him, and, why, the King blesses him —

You need not turn a page of the Romance

To learn the Dreadful Giant's fate. Indeed.

We 've the fair Lady here ; but she apart, —

A poor man, rarely having handled lance,

And rather old, weary, and far from sure

His Squires are not the Giant's friends. All 's one :

Let us go forth !

*Lady Car.* Go forth ?

*Straf.* What matters it ?

We shall die gloriously — as the book says.

*Lady Car.* To Scotland ? not to Scotland ?

*Straf.* Am I sick

Like your good brother, brave Northumberland ?

Beside, these walls seem falling on me.

*Lady Car.* Strafford,

The wind that saps these walls can undermine

Your camp in Scotland, too. Whence creeps the wind ?

Have you no eyes except for Pym? Look here!  
A breed of silken creatures lurk and thrive  
In your contempt. You'll vanquish Pym? Old Vane  
Can vanquish you! And Vane you think to fly?  
Rush on the Scots! Do nobly! Vane's slight sneer  
Shall test success, adjust the praise, suggest  
The faint result: Vane's sneer shall reach you there.  
— You do not listen!

*Lady Car.* But Strafford . . .  
*Straf.* I want a little strife, beside ; real strife ;  
This petty, palace-warfare does me harm :  
I shall feel better, fairly out of it.

*Lady Car.* Why do you smile?  
*Straf.* I  
I could have torn his throat at first  
As he leered at me on his stealthy  
To the Queen's closet. Lord, one  
I often found it in my heart to say  
"Do not traduce me to her!"

*Lady Car.* But the King . . .  
*Straf.* The King stood there, 't is not so long a  
— There ; and the whisper, Lucy, " Be my friend  
Of friends ! " — My King ! I would have . . .

*Lady Car.* . . . Died for him?

*Straf.* Sworn him true, Lucy: I can die for him.

*Lady Car.* But go not, Strafford! But you must renounce

This project on the Scots! Die! wherefore die?

Charles never loved you.

*Straf.* And he never will.

He's not of those who care the more for men

That they're unfortunate.

*Lady Car.* Then wherefore die

For such a master?

*Straf.* You that told me first

How good he was — when I must leave true friends

To find a truer friend! — that drew me here

From Ireland, — “I had but to show myself

And Charles would spurn Vane, Savile, and the rest” —

You, child, to ask me this?

*Lady Car.* (If he have set

His heart abidingly on Charles!)

Then, friend,

I shall not see you any more!

*Straf.* Yes, Lucy.

There's one man here I have to meet.

*Lady Car.* (The King!

What way to save him from the King?

My soul —

That lent from its own store the charmed disguise

That clothes the King — he shall behold my soul!)

Strafford, — I shall speak best if you'll not gaze

Upon me: I had never thought, indeed,

To speak, but you would perish, too ! So sure !  
 Could you but know what 't is to bear, my friend,  
 One image stamped within you, turning blank  
 The else imperial brilliance of your mind, —  
 A weakness, but most precious, — like a flaw  
 I' the diamond, which should shape forth some sweet  
 face

Yet to create, and meanwhile treasured there  
 Lest Nature lose her gracious thought forever !

*Straf.* When could it be ? no ! Yet . . . was it the day  
 We waited in the anteroom, till Holland  
 Should leave the presence-chamber ?

*Lady Car.*

What ?

*Straf.*

— That I

Described to you my love for Charles ?

*Lady Car.*

(Ah, no —

One must not lure him from a love like that !  
 O, let him love the King and die ! 'T is past.  
 I shall not serve him worse for that one brief  
 And passionate hope, silent forever now !)  
 And you are really bound for Scotland, then ?  
 I wish you well : you must be very sure  
 Of the King's faith, for Pym and all his crew  
 Will not be idle — setting Vane aside !

*Straf.* If Pym is busy, — you may write of Pym.

*Lady Car.* What need, since there 's your King to  
 take your part ?

He may endure Vane's counsel ; but for Pym —  
 Think you he 'll suffer Pym to . . .

*Straf.* Child, your hair  
Is glossier than the Queen's !

*Lady Car.* Is that to ask  
A curl of me ?

*Straf.* Scotland — the weary way !

*Lady Car.* Stay, let me fasten it.  
— A rival's, Strafford ?

*Straf.* [showing the George.] He hung it there :  
twine yours around it, child !

*Car.* No — no — another time — I trifle so !  
And there's a masque on foot. Farewell. The Court  
Is dull ; do something to enliven us  
In Scotland : we expect it at your hands.

*Straf.* I shall not fall in Scotland.

*Lady Car.* Prosper — if  
You'll think of me sometimes !

*Straf.* How think of him  
And not of you ? of you, the lingering streak  
(A golden one) in my good fortune's eve.

*Lady Car.* Strafford . . . Well, when the eve has its  
last streak

The night has its first star. [She goes out.

*Straf.* That voice of hers —  
You'd think she had a heart sometimes ! His voice  
Is soft too.

Only God can save him now.  
Be Thou about his bed, about his path !  
His path ! Where's England's path ? Diverging wide  
And not to join again the track my foot

Must follow — whither ? All that forlorn way  
 Among the tombs ! Far — far — till . . . What, they do  
 Then join again, these paths ? For, huge in the dusk,  
 There 's — Pym to face !

Why then, I have a foe  
 To close with, and a fight to fight at last  
 Worthy my soul ! What, do they beard the King,  
 And shall the King want Strafford at his need ?  
 Am I not here ? Not in the market-place,  
 Pressed on by the rough artisans, so proud  
 To catch a glance from Wentworth ! They 'll lie down  
 Hungry and smile " Why, it must end some day —  
 Is he not watching for our sake ? "

— Not there !

But in Whitehall, the whitened sepulchre,  
 The . . .

Curse nothing to-night ! Only one name  
 They 'll curse in all those streets to-night. Whose  
 fault ?

Did I make kings ? set up, the first, a man  
 To represent the multitude, receive  
 All love in right of them — supplant them so,  
 Until you love the man and not the king —  
 The man with the mild voice and mournful eyes  
 Which send me forth.

— To breast the bloody sea  
 That sweeps before me : with one star for guide.  
 Night has its first, supreme, forsaken star.

## ACT III.

SCENE I. *Opposite Westminster Hall.*Sir HENRY VANE, Lord SAVILE, Lord HOLLAND, and others of  
the Court.*Sir H. Vane.* The Commons thrust you out?*Savile.* And what kept you

From sharing their civility?

*Sir H. Vane.* Kept me?Fresh news from Scotland, sir! worse than the last,  
If that may be! All's up with Strafford there:  
Nothing to bar the mad Scots marching hither  
Next Lord's-day morning. That detained me, sir!  
Well now, before they thrust you out,—go on,—  
Their Speaker—did the fellow Lenthall say  
All we set down for him?*Hol.* Not a word missed.Ere he began, we entered, Savile, I  
And Bristol and some more, with hope to breed  
A wholesome awe in the new Parliament.  
But such a gang of graceless ruffians, Vane,  
As glared at us!*Vane.* So many?*Savile.* Not a bench  
Without its complement of burly knaves;  
Your hopeful son among them: Hampden leant  
Upon his shoulder—think of that!*Vane.* I'd think

On Lenthal's speech, if I could get at it.  
Urged he, I ask, how grateful they should prove  
For this unlooked-for summons from the King?

*Hol.* Just as we drilled him.

*Vane.* That the Scots will march  
On London?

*Hol.* All, and made so much of it,  
A dozen subsidies at least seemed sure  
To follow, when . . .

*Vane.* Well?

*Hol.* 'T is a strange thing now!  
I've a vague memory of a sort of sound,  
A voice, a kind of vast, unnatural voice—  
Pym, sir, was speaking! Savile, help me out:  
What was it all?

*Sav.* Something about "a matter"—  
No,—"a work for England."

*Hol.* "England's great revenge"  
He talked of.

*Sav.* How should I get used to Pym  
More than yourselves?

*Hol.* However that may be,  
"T was something with which we had naught to do,  
For we were "strangers" and 't was "England's  
work"—

(All this while looking us straight in the face)  
In other words, our presence might be spared.  
So, in the twinkling of an eye, before  
I settled to my mind what ugly brute

Was likest Pym just then, they yelled us out,  
Locked the doors after us, and here are we.

*Vane.* Eliot's old method . . .

*Sav.* Prithee, Vane, a truce  
To Eliot and his times, and the great Duke,  
And how to manage Parliaments ! 'T was you  
Advised the Queen to summon this : why, Strafford  
(To do him justice) would not hear of it.

*Vane.* Say, rather, you have done the best of turns  
To Strafford : he 's at York, we all know why.  
I would you had not set the Scots on Strafford  
Till Strafford put down Pym for us, my lord !

*Sav.* Was it I altered Strafford's plans ? did I . . .

*A Messenger enters.*

*Mes.* The Queen, my lords — she sends me : follow me  
At once ; 't is very urgent ! she requires  
Your counsel : something perilous and strange  
Occasions her command.

*Sav.* We follow, friend !

Now, Vane ; — your Parliament will plague us all !

*Vane.* No Strafford here beside !

*Sav.* If you dare hint  
I had a hand in his betrayal, sir . . .

*Hol.* Nay, find a fitter time for quarrels — Pym  
Will overmatch the best of you ; and, think,  
The Queen !

*Vane.* Come on, then : understand, I loathe  
Strafford as much as any — but his use !  
To keep off Pym — to screen a friend or two !  
I would we had reserved him yet awhile.

SCENE II. — *Whitehall.*

*The QUEEN and Lady CARLISLE.*

*Queen.* It cannot be.

*Lady Car.* It is so.

*Queen.* Why, the House

Have hardly met.

*Lady Car.* They met for that.

*Queen.* No, no!

• Meet to impeach Lord Strafford? 'T is a jest.

*Lady Car.* A bitter one.

*Queen.* Consider! 'T is the House  
We summoned so reluctantly, which nothing  
But the disastrous issue of the war  
Persuaded us to summon. They'll wreak all  
Their spite on us, no doubt; but the old way  
Is to begin by talk of grievances:  
They have their grievances to busy them.

*Lady Car.* Pym has begun his speech.

*Queen.* Where's Vane? — That is,  
Pym will impeach Lord Strafford if he leaves  
His Presidency; he's at York, we know,  
Since the Scots beat him: why should he leave York?

*Lady Car.* Because the King sent for him.

*Queen.* Ah — but if  
The King did send for him, he let him know  
We had been forced to call a Parliament —

A step which Strafford, now I come to think,  
Was vehement against.

*Lady Car.* The policy  
Escaped him, of first striking Parliaments  
To earth, then setting them upon their feet  
And giving them a sword : but this is idle.  
Did the King send for Strafford ? He will come.

*Queen.* And what am I to do ?

*Lady Car.* What do ? Fail, madam !  
Be ruined for his sake ! what matters how,  
So it but stand on record that you made  
An effort, only one ?

*Queen.* The King 's away  
At Theobalds.

*Lady Car.* Send for him at once : he must  
Dissolve the House.

*Queen.* Wait till Vane finds the truth  
Of the report : then . .

*Lady Car.* — It will matter little  
What the King does. Strafford that lends his arm,  
And breaks his heart for you !

Sir H. VANE enters.

*Vane.* The Commons, madam,  
Are sitting with closed doors. A huge debate,  
No lack of noise ; but nothing, I should guess,  
Concerning Strafford : Pym has certainly  
Not spoken yet.

*Queen.* [ To Lady CARLISLE.] You hear ?

*Lady Car.*  
That the King 's sent for !

*Sir H. Vane.* Savile will be able  
To tell you more.

*HOLLAND enters.*

*Queen.* The last news, Holland ?

*Hol.* Pym  
Is raging like a fire. The whole House means  
To follow him together to Whitehall  
And force the King to give up Strafford.

*Queen.* Strafford ?

*Hol.* If they content themselves with Strafford ! Laud  
Is talked of, Cottington and Windebank too,  
Pym has not left out one of them — I would  
You heard Pym raging !

*Queen.* Vane, go find the King !  
Tell the King, Vane, the People follow Pym  
To brave us at Whitehall !

*SAVILE enters.*

*Savile.* Not to Whitehall —  
'T is to the Lords they go : they 'll seek redress  
On Strafford from his peers — the legal way,  
They call it.

*Queen.* (Wait, Vane !)

*Sav.* But the adage gives  
Long life to threatened men. Strafford can save  
Himself so readily : at York, remember,  
In his own county, what has he to fear ?

The Commons only mean to frighten him  
From leaving York. Surely, he will not come.

*Queen.* Lucy, he will not come !

*Lady Car.* Once more, the King  
Has sent for Strafford. He will come.

*Vane.* Oh, doubtless !

And bring destruction with him ; that 's his way.  
What but his coming spoilt all Conway's plan ?  
The King must take his counsel, choose his friends,  
Be wholly ruled by him ! What's the result ?  
The North that was to rise, Ireland to help, —  
What came of it ? In my poor mind, a fright  
Is no prodigious punishment.

*Lady Car.* A fright ?

Pym will fail worse than Strafford if he thinks  
To frighten him. [*To the Queen.*] You will not save  
him, then ?

*Sav.* When something like a charge is made, the  
King

Will best know how to save him : and 't is clear,  
While Strafford suffers nothing by the matter,  
The King may reap advantage : this in question,  
No dinning you with ship-money complaints !

*Queen.* [*To Lady CARLISLE.*] If we dissolve them,  
who will pay the army ?

Protect us from the insolent Scots ?

*Lady Car.* In truth

I know not, madam. Strafford's fate concerns  
Me little : you desired to learn what course

Would save him: I obey you.

*Vane.*

Notice, too,

There can't be fairer ground for taking full  
Revenge — (Strafford's revengeful) — than he'll have  
Against his old friend Pym.

*Queen.*

Why, he shall claim

Vengeance on Pym!

*Vane.*

And Strafford, who is he

To 'scape unscathed amid the accidents  
That harass all beside? I, for my part,  
Should look for something like discomfiture  
Had the King trusted me so thoroughly  
And been so paid for it.

*Hol.*

He'll keep at York:

All will blow over: he'll return no worse,  
Humbled a little, thankful for a place  
Under as good a man. Oh, we'll dispense  
With seeing Strafford for a month or two!

STRAFFORD enters.

*Queen.* You here!

*Straf.*

The King sends for me, madam.

*Queen.*

Sir,

The King . . .

*Straf.*

An urgent matter that imports the King.

[To Lady CARLISLE.] Why, Lucy, what's in agitation  
now

That all this muttering and shrugging, see,  
Begins at me? They do not speak!

*Car.*

'T is welcome!

For we are proud of you — happy and proud  
 To have you with us, Strafford ! you were stanch  
 At Durham : you did well there ! Had you not  
 Been stayed, you might have . . . . we said, even now,  
 Our hope's in you !

*Sir H. Vane.* [To Lady CARLISLE.] The Queen would  
 speak with you.

*Straf.* Will one of you, his servants here, vouchsafe  
 To signify my presence to the King ?

*Sav.* An urgent matter ?

*Siraf.* None that touches you,  
 Lord Savile ! Say, it were some treacherous,  
 Sly, pitiful intriguing with the Scots —  
 You would go free, at least ! (They half divine  
 My purpose !) Madam, shall I see the King ?  
 The service I would render, much concerns  
 His welfare.

*Queen.* But his Majesty, my lord,  
 May not be here, may . . .

*Straf.* Its importance, then,  
 Must plead excuse for this withdrawal, madam,  
 And for the grief it gives Lord Savile here.

*Queen.* [who has been conversing with VANE and HOL-  
 LAND.] The King will see you, sir.

[To Lady CARLISLE.] Mark me : Pym's worst  
 Is done by now : he has impeached the Earl,  
 Or found the Earl too strong for him, by now.  
 Let us not seem instructed ! We should work  
 No good to Strafford, but deform ourselves

With shame in the world's eye. [To STRAFFORD.] His  
Majesty

Has much to say with you.

*Straf.* Time fleeting, too!

[To Lady CARLISLE.] No means of getting them  
away? And She —

What does she whisper? Does she know my pur-  
pose?

What does she think of it? Get them away!

*Queen.* [To Lady CARLISLE.] He comes to baffle  
Pym — he thinks the danger

Far off: tell him no word of it! a time

For help will come; we'll not be wanting then.

Keep him in play, Lucy — you, self-possessed

And calm! [To STRAFFORD.] To spare your Lord-  
ship some delay

I will myself acquaint the King. [To Lady CARLISLE.]  
Beware!

*[The QUEEN, VANE, HOLLAND, and SAVILE go out.]*

*Straf.* She knows it?

*Lady Car.* Tell me, Strafford!

*Straf.* Afterward!

This moment's the great moment of all time.

She knows my purpose?

*Lady Car.* Thoroughly: just now  
She bade me hide it from you.

*Straf.* Quick, dear child,  
The whole o' the scheme?

*Lady Car.* (Ah, he would learn if they

Connive at Pym's procedure ! Could they but  
Have once apprised the King ! But there 's no time  
For falsehood, now.) Strafford, the whole is known.

*Straf.* Known and approved ?

*Lady Car.* Hardly discountenanced.

*Straf.* And the King — say, the King consents as  
well ?

*Lady Car.* The King 's not yet informed, but will  
not dare

To interpose.

*Straf.* What need to wait him, then ?  
He 'll sanction it ! I stayed, child, tell him, long !  
It vexed me to the soul — this waiting here.  
You know him, there 's no counting on the King.  
Tell him I waited long !

*Lady Car.* (What can he mean ?  
Rejoice at the King's hollowness ?)

*Straf.* I knew  
They would be glad of it, — all over once,  
I knew they would be glad : but he 'd contrive,  
The Queen and he, to mar, by helping it,  
An angel's making.

*Lady Car.* (Is he mad ?) Dear Strafford,  
You were not wont to look so happy.

*Straf.* Sweet,  
I tried obedience thoroughly. I took  
The King's wild plan : of course, ere I could reach  
My army, Conway ruined it. I drew  
The wrecks together, raised all heaven and earth,

And would have fought the Scots : the King at once  
Made truce with them. Then, Lucy, then, dear child,  
God put it in my mind to love, serve, die  
For Charles, but never to obey him more !  
While he endured their insolence at Ripon  
I fell on them at Durham. But you 'll tell  
The King I waited ? All the anteroom  
Is filled with my adherents.

*Straf.* No, no!  
'T is here, not daring if you knew! all here

[Drawing papers from his breast.

Full proof, see, ample proof — does the Queen know I have such damning proof? Bedford and Essex, Broke, Warwick, Savile (did you notice Savile? The simper that I spoilt?) Saye, Mandeville — Sold to the Scots, body and soul, by Pym?

*Lady Car.* Great heaven!

*Straf.* . . . From Savile and his lords, to Pym  
And his losels, crushed! — Pym shall not ward the blow  
Nor Savile creep aside from it! The Crew  
And the Cabal — I crush them!

*Lady Car.* And you go—  
Stratford,— and now you go?—

*Straf.* — About no work  
In the background, I promise you! I go  
Straight to the House of Lords to claim these knaves.  
Mainwaring!

*Lady Car.* Stay — stay, Strafford !

*Straf.* She 'll return,

The Queen — some little project of her own !

No time to lose : the King takes fright perhaps.

*Lady Car.* Pym 's strong, remember !

*Straf.* Very strong, as fits

The Faction's head — with no offence to Hampden,

Vane, Rudyard, and my loving Hollis — one

And all they lodge within the Tower to-night

In just equality. Bryan ! Mainwaring !

[*Many of his Adherents enter.*

The Peers debate just now (a lucky chance)

On the Scots' war ; my visit 's opportune.

When all is over, Bryan, you 'll proceed

To Ireland : these despatches, mark me, Bryan,

Are for the Deputy, and these for Ormond :

We want the army here — my army, raised

At such a cost, that should have done such good,

And was inactive all the time ! no matter,

We 'll find a use for it. Willis . . . or, no — You !

You, friend, make haste to York : bear this, at once . . .

Or, — better stay for form's sake — see yourself

The news you carry. You remain with me

To execute the Parliament's command,

Mainwaring ! help to seize the lesser knaves ;

Take care there 's no escaping at backdoors :

I 'll not have one escape, mind me — not one !

I seem revengeful, Lucy ? Did you know

What these men dare !

*Lady Car.* It is so much they dare !

*Straf.* I proved that long ago ; my turn is now !  
Keep sharp watch, Goring, on the citizens ;  
Observe who harbors any of the brood  
That scramble off : be sure they smart for it !  
Our coffers are but lean.

And you, child, too,

Shall have your task ; deliver this to Laud.

Laud will not be the slowest in my praise :  
" Thorough " he 'll say ! — Foolish, to be so glad !  
This life is gay and glowing, after all :  
'T is worth while, Lucy, having foes like mine  
Just for the bliss of crushing them. To-day  
Is worth the living for.

*Lady Car.* That reddening brow !  
You seem . . .

*Straf.* Well — do I not ? I would be well —  
I could not but be well on such a day !  
And, this day ended, 't is of slight import  
How long the ravaged frame subjects the soul  
In Strafford.

*Lady Car.* Noble Strafford !

*Straf.* No farewell !  
I 'll see you anon, to-morrow — the first thing.  
— If She should come to stay me !

*Lady Car.* Go — 't is nothing —  
Only my heart that swells : it has been thus  
Ere now : go, Strafford !

*Straf.* To-night, then, let it be.

I must see Him : you, the next after Him.  
I'll tell you how Pym looked. Follow me, friends !  
You, gentlemen, shall see a sight this hour  
To talk of all your lives. Close after me !  
“ My friend of friends ! ”

[STRAFFORD and the rest go out.]

*Lady Car.* The King—ever the King!

No thought of one beside, whose little word  
Unveils the King to him — one word from me,  
Which yet I do not breathe !

Ah, have I spared

Strafford a pang, and shall I seek reward  
Beyond that memory? Surely too, some way  
He is the better for my love. No, no—  
He would not look so joyous—I'll believe  
His very eye would never sparkle thus,  
Had I not prayed for him this long, long while.

SCENE III. — *The Antechamber of the House of Lords.*

*Many of the Presbyterian Party. The Adherents of STRAFFORD, etc.*

4. No doubt.

I would Pym had made haste: that's Bryan, hush —  
The gallant pointing.

*Strafford's Followers.* — 1. Mark these worthies, now!

2. A goodly gathering! "Where the carcass is  
There shall the eagles" — what's the rest?

3. For eagles

Say crows.

*A Presbyterian.* Stand back, sirs!

*One of Strafford's Followers.* Are we in Geneva?

*A Presbyterian.* No — nor in Ireland; we have leave  
to breathe.

*One of Strafford's Followers.* Truly? Behold how  
privileged we be

To serve "King Pym"! There's Some-one at White-  
hall

Who skulks obscure; but Pym struts . . .

*The Presbyterian.* Nearer.

*A Follower of Strafford.* Higher,

We look to see him. [*To his Companions.*] I'm to have  
St. John

In charge; was he among the knaves just now  
That followed Pym within there?

*Another.* The gaunt man

Talking with Rudyard. Did the Earl expect  
Pym at his heels so fast? I like it not.

MAXWELL enters.

*Another.* Why, man, they rush into the net! Here's  
Maxwell —

Ha, Maxwell? How the brethren flock around  
The fellow! Do you feel the Earl's hand yet  
Upon your shoulder, Maxwell?

*Max.*

Gentlemen,

Stand back! A great thing passes here.

*A Follower of Strafford.* [To another.] The Earl  
Is at his work! [To M.] Say, Maxwell, what great  
thing!

Speak out! [To a Presbyterian.] Friend, I've a kind-  
ness for you! Friend,

I've seen you with St. John: O stockishness!

Wear such a ruff, and never call to mind

St. John's head in a charger? How, the plague,

Not laugh?

*Another.* Say, Maxwell, what great thing!

*Another.* Nay, wait:

The jest will be to wait.

*First.* And who's to bear

These demure hypocrites? You'd swear they came . . .

Came . . . just as we come!

[A Puritan enters hastily and without observing STRAFFORD'S  
Followers.]

*The Puritan.* How goes on the work?

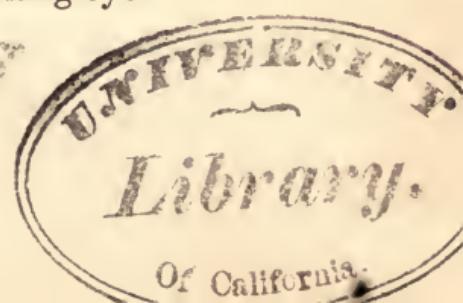
Has Pym . . .

*A Follower of Strafford.* The secret's out at last,  
Aha,

The carrion's scented! Welcome, crow the first!

Gorge merrily, you with the blinking eye!

"King Pym has fallen!"



*The Puritan.*

Pym ?

*A Strafford.*

Pym !

*A Presbyterian.*

Only Pym ?

*Many of Strafford's Followers.* No, brother, not Pym only ; Vane as well,

Rudyard as well, Hampden, St. John as well !

*A Presbyterian.* My mind misgives : can it be true ?

*Another.*

Lost ! Lost !

*A Strafford.* Say we true, Maxwell ?

*The Puritan.*

Pride before destruction,

A haughty spirit goeth before a fall.

*Many of Strafford's Followers.* Ah now ! The very thing ! A word in season !

A golden apple in a silver picture,

To greet Pym as he passes !

[*The doors at the back begin to open, noise and light issuing.*

*Max.* Stand back, all !

*Many of the Presbyterians.* I hold with Pym ! And I !

*Strafford's Followers.* Now for the text !

He comes ! Quick !

*The Puritan.* How hath the oppressor ceased !

The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked !

The sceptre of the rulers, he who smote

The people in wrath with a continual stroke,

That ruled the nations in his anger — he

Is persecuted and none hindereth !

[*The doors open, and STRAFFORD issues in the greatest disorder, and amid cries from within of " Void the House."*

*Straf.* Impeach me ! Pym ! I never struck, I think,

The felon on that calm insulting mouth  
 When it proclaimed — Pym's mouth proclaimed me . .  
 God !

Was it a word, only a word that held  
 The outrageous blood back on my heart — which beats !  
 Which beats ! Some one word — “Traitor,” did he say,  
 Bending that eye, brimful of bitter fire,  
 Upon me ?

*Max.* In the Commons' name, their servant  
 Demands Lord Strafford's sword.

*Straf.* What did you say ?

*Max.* The Commons bid me ask your Lordship's  
 sword.

*Straf.* Let us go forth : follow me, gentlemen !  
 Draw your swords too : cut any down that bar us.  
 On the King's service ! Maxwell, clear the way !

[*The Presbyterians prepare to dispute his passage.*

*Straf.* I stay : the King himself shall see me here.  
 Your tablets, fellow !

[*To MAINWARING.*] Give that to the King !  
 Yes, Maxwell, for the next half-hour, let be !  
 Nay, you shall take my sword !

[*MAXWELL advances to take it.*

Or, no — not that !

Their blood, perhaps, may wipe out all thus far,  
 All up to that — not that ! Why, friend, you see,  
 When the King lays your head beneath my foot  
 It will not pay for that. Go, all of you !

*Max.* I dare, my lord, to disobey : none stir !

*Straf.* This gentle Maxwell! — Do not touch him, Bryan!

[*To the Presbyterians.*] Whichever cur of you will carry this

Escapes his fellows' fate. None saves his life?

None?

[*Cries from within of "STRAFFORD."*]

Slingsby, I've loved you at least: make haste!  
Stab me! I have not time to tell you why.  
You then, my Bryan! Mainwaring, you, then!  
Is it because I spoke so hastily  
At Allerton? The King had vexed me.

[*To the Presbyterians.*] You!

— Not even you? If I live over this,  
The King is sure to have your heads, you know!  
But what if I can't live this minute through?  
Pym, who is there with his pursuing smile!

[*Louder cries of "STRAFFORD."*]

The King! I troubled him, stood in the way  
Of his negotiations, was the one  
Great obstacle to peace, the Enemy  
Of Scotland: and he sent for me, from York,  
My safety guaranteed — having prepared  
A Parliament — I see! And at Whitehall  
The Queen was whispering with Vane — I see  
The trap!

[*Tearing off the George.*]

I tread a gewgaw underfoot,  
And cast a memory from me. One stroke, now!

[*His own adherents disarm him. Renewed cries of "STRAFFORD."*]

England ! I see thy arm in this and yield.

Pray you now — Pym awaits me — pray you now !

[STRAFFORD reaches the doors : they open wide. HAMPDEN, and a crowd discovered, and, at the bar, PYM standing apart. As STRAFFORD kneels, the scene shuts.

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## A C T I V.

### SCENE I. — *Whitehall.*

*The KING, the QUEEN, HOLLIS, Lady CARLISLE. (VANE, HOLLAND, SAVILE, in the background.)*

*Lady Car.* Answer them, Hollis, for his sake ! One word !

*Cha. [To HOLLIS.]* You stand, silent and cold, as though I were

Deceiving you — my friend, my playfellow  
Of other times. What wonder after all ?  
Just so, I dreamed my People loved me.

*Hol.* Sir,

It is yourself that you deceive, not me.

You 'll quit me comforted, your mind made up  
That, since you 've talked thus much and grieved thus  
much,

All you can do for Strafford has been done.

*Queen.* If you kill Strafford — (come, we grant you  
leave,

Suppose) —

*Hol.* I may withdraw, sir ?

*Lady Car.* Hear them out !

'T is the last chance for Strafford ! Hear them out !

*Hol.* "If we kill Strafford" — on the eighteenth day  
Of Strafford's trial — "We!"

*Cha.* Pym, my good Hollis —  
Pym, I should say !

*Hol.* Ah, true — sir, pardon me !

You witness our proceedings every day ;  
But the screened gallery, I might have guessed,  
Admits of such a partial glimpse at us,  
Pym takes up all the room, shuts out the view.  
Still, on my honor, sir, the rest of the place  
Is not unoccupied. The Commons sit  
— That's England ; Ireland sends, and Scotland too,  
Their representatives ; the Peers that judge  
Are easily distinguished ; one remarks  
The People here and there : but the close curtain  
Must hide so much !

*Queen.* Acquaint your insolent crew,  
This day the curtain shall be dashed aside !  
It served a purpose.

*Hol.* Think ! This very day ?  
Ere Strafford rises to defend himself ?

*Cha.* I will defend him, sir ! — sanction the Past  
This day : it ever was my purpose. Rage  
At me, not Strafford !

*Lady Car.* Nobly ! — will he not  
Do nobly ?

*Hol.* Sir, you will do honestly;  
And, for that deed, I too would be a king.

*Cha.* Only, to do this now! — “deaf” (in your style)  
“To subjects’ prayers,” — I must oppose them now.  
It seems their will the Trial should proceed, —  
So palpably their will!

*Hol.* You peril much,  
But it were no bright moment save for that.  
Strafford, your prime support, the sole roof-tree  
That props this quaking House of Privilege,  
(Floods come, winds beat, and see — the treacherous  
sand!)

Doubtless, if the mere putting forth an arm  
Could save him, you’d save Strafford.

*Cha.* And they mean  
Calmly to consummate this wrong! No hope?  
This ineffaceable wrong! No pity then?

*Hol.* No plague in store for perfidy? — Farewell!  
You called me, sir — [*To Lady CARLISLE*] you, lady,  
bade me come  
To save the Earl: I came, thank God for it,  
To learn how far such perfidy can go!  
You, sir, concert with me on saving him  
Who have just ruined Strafford!

*Cha.* I? — and how?

*Hol.* Eighteen days long he throws, one after one,  
Pym’s charges back: a blind moth-eaten law!  
— He’ll break from it at last: and whom to thank?  
The mouse that gnawed the lion’s net for him

Got a good friend,— but he, the other mouse,  
 That looked on while the lion freed himself ——  
 Fared he so well, does any fable say ?

*Cha.* What can you mean ?

*Hol.* Pym never could have proved  
 Strafford's design of bringing up the troops  
 To force this kingdom to obedience : Vane —  
 Your servant, not our friend, has proved it.

*Cha.* Vane ?

*Hol.* This day. Did Vane deliver up or no  
 Those notes which, furnished by his son to Pym,  
 Seal Strafford's fate ?

*Cha.* Sir, as I live, I know  
 Nothing that Vane has done ! What treason next ?  
 I wash my hands of it. Vane, speak the truth !  
 Ask Vane himself !

*Hol.* I will not speak to Vane  
 Who speak to Pym and Hampden every day.

*Queen.* Speak to Vane's master then ! What gain  
 to him

Were Strafford's death ?

*Hol.* Ha ? Strafford cannot turn  
 As you, sir, sit there — bid you forth, demand  
 If every hateful act were not set down  
 In his commission ? — Whether you contrived  
 Or no, that all the violence should seem  
 His work, the gentle ways — your own, his part  
 To counteract the King's kind impulses —  
 While . . . but you know what he could say ! And then

He might produce, — mark, sir, — a certain charge  
 To set the King's express command aside,  
 If need were, and be blameless ! He might add . . .

*Cha.* Enough !

*Hol.* — Who bade him break the Parliament,  
 Find some pretext for setting up sword-law !

*Queen.* Retire !

*Cha.* Once more, whatever Vane dared do,  
 I know not : he is rash, a fool — I know  
 Nothing of Vane !

*Hol.* Well — I believe you. Sir,  
 Believe me, in return, that . . .

[*Turning to Lady CARLISLE.*] Gentle lady,  
 The few words I would say, the stones might hear  
 Sooner than these, — I rather speak to you,  
 You, with the heart ! The question, trust me, takes  
 Another shape, to-day : not, if the King  
 Or England shall succumb, — but, who shall pay  
 The forfeit, Strafford or his master. Sir,  
 You loved me once : think on my warning now !

[*Goes out.*

*Cha.* On you and on your warning both ! — Carlisle !  
 That paper !

*Queen.* But consider !

*Cha.* Give it me !  
 There, signed — will that content you ? Do not speak !  
 You have betrayed me, Vane. See ! any day,  
 According to the tenor of that paper,  
 He bids your brother bring the army up,

Strafford shall head it and take full revenge.  
Seek Strafford ! Let him have the same, before  
He rises to defend himself !

Queen. In truth?

That your shrewd Hollis should have worked a change  
Like this ! You, late reluctant . . .

Cha. Say, Carlisle

Your brother Percy brings the army up,  
Falls on the Parliament — (I'll think of you,  
My Hollis !) say, we plotted long — 't is mine,  
The scheme is mine, remember ! Say, I cursed  
Vane's folly in your hearing ! If the Earl  
Does rise to do us shame, the fault shall lie  
With you, Carlisle !

*Lady Car.* Nay, fear not me! but still  
That's a bright moment, sir, you throw away.  
Tear down the veil and save him!

*Queen.* Go, Carlisle !

*Lady Car.* (I shall see Strafford — speak to him: my heart

Must never beat so, then ! And if I tell  
The truth ? What 's gained by falsehood ? There they  
stand

Whose trade it is, whose life it is! How vain  
To gild such rottenness! Strafford shall know,  
Thoroughly know them!)

*Queen.* Trust to me! [To CARLISLE.] Carlisle,  
You seem inclined, alone of all the Court,  
To serve poor Strafford: this bold plan of yours

Merits much praise, and yet . . .

*Lady Car.* Time presses, madam.

*Queen.* Yet — may it not be something premature ?

Strafford defends himself to-day — reserves

Some wondrous effort, one may well suppose !

*Lady Car.* Ay, Hollis hints as much.

*Cha.* Why linger then ?

Haste with the scheme — my scheme : I shall be there

To watch his look. Tell him I watch his look !

*Queen.* Stay, we 'll precede you !

*Lady Car.* At your pleasure.

*Cha.* Say —

Say, Vane is hardly ever at Whitehall !

I shall be there, remember !

*Lady Car.* Doubt me not.

*Cha.* On our return, Carlisle, we wait you here !

*Lady Car.* I 'll bring his answer. Sir, I follow you.

(Prove the King faithless, and I take away

All Strafford cares to live for : let it be —

'T is the King's scheme !

My Strafford, I can save,

Nay, I *have* saved you, yet am scarce content,

Because my poor name will not cross your mind.

Strafford, how much I am unworthy you !)

SCENE II. — *A passage adjoining Westminster Hall.*

*Many groups of Spectators of the Trial. Officers of the Court, etc*

*1st Spec.* More crowd than ever! Not know Hampden, man?

That's he, by Pym, Pym that is speaking now.  
No, truly, if you look so high you'll see  
Little enough of either!

*2d Spec.* Stay: Pym's arm  
Points like a prophet's rod.

*3d Spec.* Ay, ay, we've heard  
Some pretty speaking: yet the Earl escapes.

*4th Spec.* I fear it: just a foolish word or two  
About his children — and we see, forsooth,  
Not England's foe in Strafford, but the man  
Who, sick, half-blind . . .

*2d Spec.* What's that Pym's saying now  
Which makes the curtains flutter? look! A hand  
Clutches them. Ah! The King's hand!

*5th Spec.* I had thought  
Pym was not near so tall. What said he, friend?

*2d Spec.* "Nor is this way a novel way of blood,"  
And the Earl turns as if to . . . look! look!

*Many Spectators.* There!  
What ails him? no — he rallies, see — goes on  
And Strafford smiles. Strange!

*An Officer.* Haselrig!

*Many Spectators.* Friend? Friend?

*The Officer.* Lost, utterly lost! just when we looked  
for Pym

To make a stand against the ill effects  
Of the Earl's speech! Is Haselrig without?  
Pym's message is to him.

*3d Spec.* Now, said I true?

Will the Earl leave them yet at fault or no?

*1st Spec.* Never believe it, man! These notes of  
Ruin the Earl. [Vane's

*5th Spec.* A brave end: not a whit  
Less firm, less Pym all over. Then, the Trial  
Is closed. No — Strafford means to speak again?

*An Officer.* Stand back, there!

*5th Spec.* Why, the Earl is coming hither!  
Before the court breaks up! His brother, look, —  
You 'd say he deprecated some fierce act  
In Strafford's mind just now.

*An Officer.* Stand back, I say!

*2d Spec.* Who 's the veiled woman that he talks  
with?

*Many Spectators.* Hush —

The Earl! the Earl!

[Enter STRAFFORD, SLINGSBY, and other Secretaries, HOL-  
LIS, Lady CARLISLE, MAXWELL, BALFOUR, etc. STRAF-  
FORD converses with Lady CARLISLE.

*Hol.* So near the end! Be patient —  
Return!

*Straf.* [To his Secretaries.] Here — anywhere — or,  
't is freshest here!

To spend one's April here, the blossom-month !  
Set it down here !

[*They arrange a table, papers, etc.*

So, Pym can quail, can cower  
Because I glance at him, yet more 's to do ?  
What 's to be answered, Slingsby ? Let us end !  
[*To Lady CARLISLE.*] Child, I refuse his offer ; what-  
soe'er

It be ! Too late ! Tell me no word of him !  
'T is something, Hollis, I assure you that —  
To stand, sick as you are, some eighteen days  
Fighting for life and fame against a pack  
Of very curs, that lie thro' thick and thin,  
Eat flesh and bread by wholesale, and can't say  
" Strafford " if it would take my life !

*Lady Car.* Be moved !  
Glance at the paper !

*Straf.* Already at my heels !  
Pym's faulting bloodhounds scent the track again  
Peace, child ! Now, Slingsby !

[*Messengers from LANE and other of STRAFFORD's Counsel  
within the Hall are coming and going during the Scene.*

*Straf.* [*setting himself to write and dictate.*] I shall  
beat you, Hollis !

Do you know that ? In spite of St. John's tricks,  
In spite of Pym — your Pym who shrank from me !  
Eliot would have contrived it otherwise.

[*To a Messenger.*] In truth ? This slip, tell Lane, con-  
tains as much.

As I can call to mind about the matter.

Eliot would have disdained . . .

[*Calling after the Messenger.*] And Radcliffe, say,  
The only person who could answer Pym,  
Is safe in prison, just for that.

Well, well !

It had not been recorded in that case,  
I baffled you.

[*To Lady CARLISLE.*] Nay, child, why look so grieved ?  
All 's gained without the King ! You saw Pym quail ?  
What shall I do when they acquit me, think you,  
But tranquilly resume my task as though  
Nothing had intervened since I proposed  
To call that traitor to account ! Such tricks,  
Trust me, shall not be played a second time,  
Say, even against Laud, with his gray hair —  
Your good work, Hollis ! Peace ! to make amends  
You, Lucy, shall be there when I impeach  
Pym and his fellows.

*Hol.* Wherefore not protest  
Against our whole proceeding, long ago ?  
Why feel indignant now ? Why stand this while  
Enduring patiently ?

*Straf.* Child, I 'll tell you —  
You, and not Pym — you, the slight graceful girl  
Tall for a flowering lily, and not Hollis —  
Why I stood patient ! I was fool enough  
To see the will of England in Pym's will,  
To fear, myself had wronged her, and to wait

Her judgment,—when, behold, in place of it . . .

[*To a Messenger who whispers.*] Tell Lane to answer  
no such question! Law,—

I grapple with their law! I'm here to try  
My actions by their standard, not my own!  
Their law allowed that levy: what's the rest  
To Pym, or Lane, any but God and me?

*Lady Car.* The King's so weak! Secure this chance!  
'T was Vane,

Never forget, who furnished Pym the notes . . .

*Straf.* Fit,—very fit, those precious notes of Vane,  
To close the Trial worthily! I feared  
Some spice of nobleness might linger yet  
And spoil the character of all the Past.

Vane eased me . . . and I will go back and say  
As much — to Pym, to England! Follow me!  
I have a word to say! There! my defence  
Is done!

Stay! why be proud? Why care to own  
My gladness, my surprise? — Nay, not surprise!  
Wherefore insist upon the little pride  
Of doing all myself, and sparing him  
The pain? Child, say the triumph is my King's!  
When Pym grew pale, and trembled, and sank down,  
One image was before me: could I fail?  
Child, care not for the Past, so indistinct,  
Obscure — there's nothing to forgive in it  
'T is so forgotten! From this day begins  
A new life, founded on a new belief

In Charles.

*Hol.* In Charles? Rather, believe in Pym!  
And here he comes in proof! Appeal to Pym!  
Say how unfair . . .

*Straf.* To Pym? I would say nothing!  
I would not look upon Pym's face again.

*Lady Car.* Stay, let me have to think I pressed your hand!

[STRAFFORD and his friends go out.

*Enter HAMPDEN and VANE.*

*Vane.* O Hampden, save that great misguided man!  
Plead Strafford's cause with Pym! I have remarked  
He moved no muscle when we all declaimed  
Against him: you had but to breathe — he turned  
Those kind, calm eyes upon you.

[Enter PYM, the Solicitor-General ST. JOHN, the Managers  
of the Trial, FIENNES, RUDYARD, etc.

*Rud.* Horrible!

Till now all hearts were with you: I withdraw  
For one. Too horrible! But we mistake  
Your purpose, Pym: you cannot snatch away  
The last spar from the drowning man.

*Fien.* He talks

With St. John of it — see, how quietly!

[To other Presbyterians.] You'll join us? Strafford  
may deserve the worst:

But this new course is monstrous. Vane, take heart!  
This Bill of his Attainder shall not have  
One true man's hand to it.

*Vane.*

Consider, Pym !

Confront your Bill, your own Bill : what is it ?  
You cannot catch the Earl on any charge, —  
No man will say the law has hold of him  
On any charge ; and therefore you resolve  
To take the general sense on his desert,  
As though no law existed, and we met  
To found one. You refer to Parliament  
To speak its thought upon this hideous mass  
Of half-borne out assertions, dubious hints  
Hereafter to be cleared, distortions — ay,  
And wild inventions. Every man is saved  
The task of fixing any single charge  
On Strafford : he has but to see in him  
The enemy of England.

*Pym.*

A right scruple !

I have heard some called England's enemy  
With less consideration.

*Vane.*

Pity me !

Indeed you made me think I was your friend !  
I who have murdered Strafford, how remove  
That memory from me ?

*Pym.*

I absolve you, Vane.

Take you no care for aught that you have done !

*Vane.* John Hampden, not this Bill ! Reject this  
Bill !

He staggers through the ordeal : let him go,  
Strew no fresh fire before him ! Plead for us !  
When Strafford spoke, your eyes were thick with tears !

*Hamp.* England speaks louder: who are we, to play  
The generous pardoner at her expense,  
Magnanimously waive advantages,  
And, if he conquer us, applaud his skill?

*Vane.* He was your friend.

*Pym.* I have heard that before.

*Fien.* And England trusts you.

*Hamp.* Shame be his, who turns  
The opportunity of serving her  
She trusts him with, to his own mean account —  
Who would look nobly frank at her expense!

*Fien.* I never thought it could have come to this.

*Pym.* But I have made myself familiar, Fiennes,  
With this one thought — have walked, and sat, and  
slept,

This thought before me. I have done such things,  
Being the chosen man that should destroy  
The traitor. You have taken up this thought  
To play with, for a gentle stimulant,  
To give a dignity to idler life  
By the dim prospect of emprise to come,  
But ever with the softening, sure belief,  
That all would end some strange way right at last.

*Fien.* Had we made out some weightier charge!

*Pym.* You say

That these are petty charges: can we come  
To the real charge at all? There he is safe  
In tyranny's stronghold. Apostasy  
Is not a crime, treachery not a crime:

The cheek burns, the blood tingles, when you speak  
 The words, but where's the power to take revenge  
 Upon them? We must make occasion serve,—  
 The oversight here, pay for the main sin  
 That mocks us.

*Rud.* But this unexampled course,  
 This Bill!

*Pym.* By this, we roll the clouds away  
 Of precedent and custom, and at once  
 Bid the great beacon-light God sets in all,  
 The conscience of each bosom, shine upon  
 The guilt of Strafford: each shall lay his hand  
 Upon his breast, and judge.

*Vane.* I only see  
 Strafford, nor pass his corpse for all beyond!

*Rud. and others.* Forgive him! He would join us, now  
 he finds

What the King counts reward! The pardon, too,  
 Should be your own. Yourself should bear to Strafford  
 The pardon of the Commons.

*Pym.* Meet him? Strafford?  
 Have we to meet once more, then? Be it so!  
 And yet—the prophecy seemed half fulfilled  
 When, at the Trial, as he gazed, my youth,  
 Our friendship, divers thoughts came back at once  
 And left me, for a time . . . 'T is very sad!  
 To-morrow we discuss the points of law  
 With Lane— to-morrow?

*Vane.* Not before to-morrow—

So, time enough ! I knew you would relent !

*Pym.* The next day, Haselrig, you introduce  
The Bill of his Attainder. Pray for me !

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SCENE III. — *Whitehall.*

*The KING.*

*Cha.* My loyal servant ! — To defend himself  
Thus irresistibly, — withholding aught  
That seemed to implicate us !

We have done  
Less gallantly by Strafford. Well, the Future  
Must recompense the Past.

She tarries long.  
I understand you, Strafford, now !

The scheme —  
Carlisle's mad scheme — he 'll sanction it, I fear,  
For love of me. 'T was too precipitate :  
Before the army 's fairly on its march,  
He 'll be at large : no matter.

Well, Carlisle ?

*Enter PYM.*

*Pym.* Fear me not, sir : — my mission is to save,  
This time.

*Cha.* To break thus on me ! Unannounced !

*Pym.* It is of Strafford I would speak.

*Cha.* No more  
Of Strafford ! I have heard too much from you.

*Pym.* I spoke, sir, for the People: will you hear  
A word upon my own account?

*Cha.* Of Strafford?

(So, turns the tide already? Have we tamed  
The insolent brawler? — Strafford's eloquence  
Is swift in its effect.) Lord Strafford, sir,  
Has spoken for himself.

*Pym.* Sufficiently.

I would apprise you of the novel course  
The People take: the Trial fails.

*Cha.* Yes — yes —

We are aware, sir: for your part in it  
Means shall be found to thank you.

*Pym.* Pray you, read  
This schedule! I would learn from your own mouth  
— (It is a matter much concerning me) —  
Whether, if two Estates of us concede  
The death of Strafford, on the grounds set forth  
Within that parchment, you, sir, can resolve  
To grant your own consent to it. That Bill  
Is framed by me. If you determine, sir,  
That England's manifested will should guide  
Your judgment, ere another week such will  
Shall manifest itself. If not, — I cast  
Aside the measure.

*Cha.* You can hinder, then,  
The introduction of this Bill?

*Pym.* I can.

*Cha.* He is my friend, sir: I have wronged him:  
mark you,

Had I not wronged him, this might be. You think  
Because you hate the Earl . . . (turn not away,  
We know you hate him) — no one else could love  
Strafford: but he has saved me, some affirm.  
Think of his pride ! And, do you know one strange,  
One frightful thing ? We all have used the man  
As though a drudge of ours, with not a source  
Of happy thoughts except in us ; and yet  
Strafford has wife and children, household cares,  
Just as if we had never been. Ah, sir,  
You are moved, even you, a solitary man  
Wed to your cause — to England if you will !

*Pym.* Yes — think, my soul — to England ! Draw  
not back !

*Cha.* Prevent that Bill, sir ! All your course seems  
fair

Till now. Why, in the end, 'tis I should sign  
The warrant for his death ! You have said much  
I ponder on ; I never meant, indeed,  
Strafford should serve me any more. I take  
The Commons' counsel ; but this Bill is yours —  
Nor worthy of its leader : care not, sir,  
For that, however ! I will quite forget  
You named it to me. You are satisfied ?

*Pym.* Listen to me, sir ! Eliot laid his hand,  
Wasted and white, upon my forehead once ;  
Wentworth — he 's gone now ! — has talked on, whole  
nights,  
And I beside him ; Hampden loves me : sir,

How can I breathe and not wish England well,  
And her King well ?

*Cha.* I thank you, sir ! who leave  
That King his servant. Thanks, sir !

*Pym.* Let me speak !  
— Who may not speak again ; whose spirit yearns  
For a cool night after this weary day :  
— Who would not have my soul turn sicker yet  
In a new task, more fatal, more august,  
More full of England's utter weal or woe.  
I thought, sir, could I find myself with you,  
After this Trial, alone, as man to man —  
I might say something, warn you, pray you, save —  
Mark me, King Charles, save — you !  
But God must do it. Yet I warn you, sir —  
(With Strafford's faded eyes yet full on me)  
As you would have no deeper question moved  
— “How long the Many must endure the One,”  
Assure me, sir, if England give assent  
To Strafford's death, you will not interfere !  
Or —

*Cha.* God forsakes me. I am in a net.  
And cannot move. Let all be as you say !

*Enter Lady CARLISLE.*

*Lady Car.* He loves you — looking beautiful with joy  
Because you sent me ! he would spare you all  
The pain ! he never dreamed you would forsake  
Your servant in the evil day — nay, see

Your scheme returned ! That generous heart of his !  
 He needs it not — or, needing it, disdains  
 A course that might endanger you — you, sir,  
 Whom Strafford from his inmost soul . . .

[*Seeing Pym.*] Well met !

No fear for Strafford ! all that 's true and brave  
 On your own side shall help us : we are now  
 Stronger than ever.

Ha — what, sir, is this ?

All is not well ! What parchment have you there ?

*Pym.* Sir, much is saved us both.

*Lady Car.* This Bill ! Your lip  
 Whitens — you could not read one line to me  
 Your voice would falter so !

*Pym.* No recreant yet !

The great word went from England to my soul,  
 And I arose. The end is very near.

*Lady Car.* I am to save him ! All have shrunk  
 beside —

'T is only I am left ! Heaven will make strong  
 The hand now as the heart. Then let both die !

## A C T V.

SCENE I.—*Whitehall.*

HOLLIS, Lady CARLISLE.

*Hol.* Tell the King, then ! Come in with me !*Lady Car.* Not so !

He must not hear till it succeeds.

*Hol.* Succeed ?

No dream was half so vain — you 'd rescue Strafford  
And outwit Pym ! I cannot tell you . . . lady,  
The block pursues me, and the hideous show  
To-day . . . is it to-day ? And all the while  
He 's sure of the King's pardon. Think, I have  
To tell this man he is to die. The King  
May rend his hair, for me ! I 'll not see Strafford !

*Lady Car.* Only, if I succeed, remember — Charles  
Has saved him ! He would hardly value life  
Unless his gift. My stanch friends wait. Go in —  
You must go in to Charles !

*Hol.* And all beside  
Left Strafford long ago. The King has signed  
The warrant for his death : the Queen was sick  
Of the eternal subject. For the Court, —  
The Trial was amusing in its way,  
Only too much of it : the Earl withdrew  
In time. But you, fragile, alone, so young,  
Amid rude mercenaries — you devise

A plan to save him ! Even though it fails,  
What shall reward you ?

*Lady Car.* I may go, you think,  
To France with him ? And you reward me, friend,  
Who lived with Strafford even from his youth  
Before he set his heart on state-affairs  
And they bent down that noble brow of his.  
I have learned somewhat of his latter life,  
And all the future I shall know : but, Hollis,  
I ought to make his youth my own as well.  
Tell me, — when he is saved !

*Hol.* My gentle friend,  
He should know all and love you, but 't is vain !

*Lady Car.* Love ? no — too late now ! Let him love  
the King !

'T is the King's scheme ! I have your word, remember !  
We 'll keep the old delusion up. But, quick !  
Quick ! Each of us has work to do, beside !  
Go to the King ! I hope — Hollis — I hope !  
Say nothing of my scheme ! Hush, while we speak  
Think where he is ! Now for my gallant friends !

*Hol.* Where he is ? Calling wildly upon Charles,  
Guessing his fate, pacing the prison-floor.  
Let the King tell him ! I 'll not look on Strafford.

SCENE II. — *The Tower.*

STRAFFORD sitting with his Children. They sing.

*O bell' andare  
Per barca in mare,  
Verso la sera  
Di Primavera!*

*William.* The boat's in the broad moonlight all this while —

*Verso la sera  
Di Primavera!*

And the boat shoots from underneath the moon  
Into the shadowy distance ; only still  
You hear the dipping oar —

*Verso la sera,*

And faint, and fainter, and then all 's quite gone,  
Music and light and all, like a lost star.

*Anne.* But you should sleep, father : you were to sleep.

*Straf.* I do sleep, Anne ; or if not — you must know  
There's such a thing as . . .

*Wil.* You're too tired to sleep ?

*Straf.* It will come by and by and all day long,  
In that old quiet house I told you of :  
We sleep safe there.

*Anne.* Why not in Ireland ?

*Straf.* No !

Too many dreams ! — That song's for Venice, William :

You know how Venice looks upon the map—  
Isles that the mainland hardly can let go?

*Wil.* You 've been to Venice, father?

*Straf.* I was young then.

*Wil.* A city with no King; that 's why I like  
Even a song that comes from Venice.

*Straf.* William!

*Wil.* Oh, I know why! Anne, do you love the  
King?

But I 'll see Venice for myself one day.

*Straf.* See many lands, boy — England last of all, —  
That way you 'll love her best.

*Wil.* Why do men say  
You sought to ruin her, then?

*Straf.* Ah, — they say that.

*Wil.* Why?

*Straf.* I suppose they must have words to say,  
As you to sing.

*Anne.* But they make songs beside :  
Last night I heard one, in the street beneath,  
That called you . . . Oh, the names!

*Wil.* Don't mind her, father!  
They soon left off when I cried out to them.

*Straf.* We shall so soon be out of it, my boy!  
'T is not worth while: who heeds a foolish song?

*Wil.* Why, not the King.

*Straf.* Well: it has been the fate  
Of better; and yet, — wherefore not feel sure  
That Time, who in the twilight comes to mend

All the fantastic day's caprice, consign  
 To the low ground once more the ignoble Term,  
 And raise the Genius on his orb again,—  
 That Time will do me right?

*Anne.* (Shall we sing, William?  
 He does not look thus when we sing.)

*Straf.* For Ireland,  
 Something is done: too little, but enough  
 To show what might have been.

*Wil.* (I have no heart  
 To sing now! Anne, how very sad he looks!  
 Oh, I so hate the King for all he says!)

*Straf.* Forsook them! What, the common songs will  
 run

That I forsook the People? Nothing more?  
 Ay, Fame, the busy scribe, will pause, no doubt,  
 Turning a deaf ear to her thousand slaves  
 Noisy to be enrolled,— will register  
 The curious glosses, subtle notices,  
 Ingenious clearings-up one fain would see  
 Beside that plain inscription of The Name—  
 The Patriot Pym, or the Apostate Strafford!

[*The children resume their song timidly, but break off.*  
*Enter HOLLIS and an Attendant.*

*Straf.* No,— Hollis? in good time!— Who is he?

*Hol.* One  
 That must be present.

*Straf.* Ah— I understand.  
 They will not let me see poor Laud alone.

How politic ! They 'd use me by degrees  
To solitude : and just as you came in  
I was solicitous what life to lead  
When Strafford 's "not so much as Constable  
In the King 's service." Is there any means  
To keep one 's self awake ? What would you do  
After this bustle, Hollis, in my place ?

*Hol.* Strafford !

*Straf.* Observe, not but that Pym and you  
Will find me news enough — news I shall hear  
Under a quince-tree by a fish-pond side  
At Wentworth. Garrard must be re-engaged  
My newsman. Or, a better project now —  
What if when all 's consummated, and the Saints  
Reign ; and the Senate 's work goes swimmingly, —  
What if I venture up, some day, unseen,  
To saunter through the Town, notice how Pym,  
Your Tribune, likes Whitehall, drop quietly  
Into a tavern, hear a point discussed,  
As, whether Strafford 's name were John or James —  
And be myself appealed to — I, who shall  
Myself have near forgotten !

*Hol.* I would speak . . .

*Straf.* Then you shall speak, — not now : I want just  
now,  
To hear the sound of my own tongue. This place  
Is full of ghosts.

*Hol.* Nay, you must hear me, Strafford !

*Straf.* Oh, readily ! Only, one rare thing more, —

The minister ! Who will advise the King,  
Turn his Sejanus, Richelieu, and what not,  
And yet have health — children, for aught I know —  
My patient pair of traitors ! Ah, — but, William —  
Does not his cheek grow thin ?

Wil. 'T is you look thin,  
Father!

*Straf.* A scamper o'er the breezy wolds  
Sets all to-rights.

*Hol.*                    You cannot sure forget  
A prison-roof is o'er you, Strafford?

*Straf.* No,  
Why, no. I would not touch on that, the  
I left you that. Well, Hollis? Say at once  
The King can find no time to set me free!  
A mask at Theobalds?

*Hol.* Hold : no such affair  
Detains him.

*Straf.* True: what needs so great a matter?  
The Queen's lip may be sore. Well: when he pleases,—  
Only, I want the air: it vexes flesh  
To be pent up so long.

*Hol.* The King — I bear  
His message, Strafford: pray you, let me speak!

*Straf.* Go, William! Anne, try o'er your song again!

[The children retire.]

They shall be loyal, friend, at all events.

I know your message: you have nothing new  
To tell me: from the first I guessed as much.

I know, instead of coming here himself  
 Leading me forth in public by the hand,  
 The King prefers to leave the door ajar  
 As though I were escaping — bids me trudge  
 While the mob gapes upon some show prepared  
 On the other side of the river ! Give at once  
 His order of release ! I 've heard, as well,  
 Of certain poor manœuvrings to avoid  
 The granting pardon at his proper risk ;  
 First, he must prattle somewhat to the Lords,  
 Must talk a trifle with the Commons first,  
 Be grieved I should abuse his confidence,  
 And far from blaming them, and . . . Where 's the  
 order ?

*Hol.* Spare me !

*Straf.* Why, he 'd not have me steal away ?  
 With an old doublet and a steeple hat  
 Like Prynne's ? Be smuggled into France, perhaps ?  
 Hollis, 't is for my children ! 'T was for them  
 I first consented to stand day by day  
 And give your Puritans the best of words,  
 Be patient, speak when called upon, observe  
 Their rules, and not return them prompt their lie !  
 What 's in that boy of mine that he should prove  
 Son to a prison-breaker ? I shall stay  
 And he 'll stay with me. Charles should know as  
 much —

He too has children !

[*Turning to HOLLIS's companion.*] Sir, you feel for me !

No need to hide that face ! Though it have looked  
 Upon me from the judgment-seat . . . I know  
 Strangely, that somewhere it has looked on me . . .  
 Your coming has my pardon, nay, my thanks.  
 For there is One who comes not.

*Hol.* Whom forgive,  
 As one to die !

*Straf.* True, all die, and all need  
 Forgiveness : I forgive him from my soul.

*Hol.* 'T is a world's wonder : Strafford, you must  
 die !

*Straf.* Sir, if your errand is to set me free  
 This heartless jest mars much. Ha ! Tears in truth ?  
 We 'll end this ! See this paper, warm — feel — warm  
 With lying next my heart ! Whose hand is there ?  
 Whose promise ? Read, and loud for God to hear !  
 " Strafford shall take no hurt " — read it, I say !  
 " In person, honor, nor estate " —

*Hol.* The King . . .

*Straf.* I could unking him by a breath ! You sit  
 Where Loudon sat, who came to prophesy  
 The certain end, and offer me Pym's grace  
 If I 'd renounce the King : and I stood firm  
 On the King's faith. The King who lives . . .

*Hol.* To sign  
 The warrant for your death.

*Straf.* " Put not your trust  
 In princes, neither in the sons of men,  
 In whom is no salvation ! "

*Hol.*

Trust in God.

The scaffold is prepared : they wait for you :  
He has consented. Cast the earth behind !

*Cha.* You would not see me, Strafford, at your foot !  
It was wrung from me ! Only curse me not !

*Hol.* [To STRAFFORD.] As you hope grace and par-  
don in your need,  
Be merciful to this most wretched man !

[*Voices from within.*

*Verso la sera*

*Di Primavera.*

*Straf.* You 'll be good to those children, sir ? I know  
You 'll not believe her, even should the Queen  
Think they take after one they rarely saw.  
I had intended that my son should live  
A stranger to these matters : but you are  
So utterly deprived of friends ! He too  
Must serve you — will you not be good to him ?  
Or, stay, sir, do not promise — do not swear !  
You, Hollis — do the best you can for me !  
I 've not a soul to trust to : Wandesford 's dead,  
And you 've got Radcliffe safe, Laud's turn comes next :  
I 've found small time of late for my affairs,  
But I trust any of you, Pym himself —  
No one could hurt them : there 's an infant, too —  
These tedious cares ! Your Majesty could spare them !  
Nay — pardon me, my King ! I had forgotten  
Your education, trials, much temptation,  
Some weakness : there escaped a peevish word —

'T is gone : I bless you at the last. You know  
All's between you and me : what has the world  
To do with it ? Farewell !

*Cha. [at the door.]* Balfour ! Balfour !

*Enter BALFOUR.*

The Parliament ! — go to them : I grant all  
Demands. Their sittings shall be permanent :  
Tell them to keep their money if they will :  
I'll come to them for every coat I wear  
And every crust I eat : only I choose  
To pardon Strafford. As the Queen shall choose !  
— You never heard the People howl for blood,  
Beside !

*Bal.* Your Majesty may hear them now :  
The walls can hardly keep their murmurs out :  
Please you retire !

*Cha.* Take all the troops, Balfour !

*Bal.* There are some hundred thousand of the crowd.

*Cha.* Come with me, Strafford ! You'll not fear, at  
least !

*Straf.* Balfour, say nothing to the world of this !  
I charge you, as a dying man, forget  
You gazed upon this agony of one . . .  
Of one . . . or if . . . why you may say, Balfour,  
The King was sorry : 't is no shame in him :  
Yes, you may say he even wept, Balfour,  
And that I walked the lighter to the block  
Because of it. I shall walk lightly, sir !  
Earth fades, Heaven breaks on me : I shall stand next

Before God's throne : the moment's close at hand  
 When Man the first, last time, has leave to lay  
 His whole heart bare before its Maker, leave  
 To clear up the long error of a life  
 And choose one happiness for evermore.  
 With all mortality about me, Charles,  
 The sudden wreck, the dregs of violent death —  
 What if, despite the opening angel-song,  
 There penetrate one prayer for you ? Be saved  
 Through me ! Bear witness, no one could prevent  
 My death ! Lead on ! ere he awake — best, now !  
 All must be ready : did you say, Balfour,  
 The crowd began to murmur ? They'll be kept  
 Too late for sermon at St. Antholin's !  
 Now ! but tread softly — children are at play  
 In the next room. Precede ! I follow —

*Enter Lady CARLISLE, with many Attendants.*

*Lady Car.*

Me !

Follow me, Strafford, and be saved ! The King ?

[*To the KING.*] Well — as you ordered, they are ranged  
 without,

The convoy . . [*seeing the KING's state.*]

[*To STRAFFORD.*] You know all, then ! Why, I  
 thought

It looked best that the King should save you, Charles  
 Alone ; 't is shame that you should owe me aught.  
 Or, no, not shame ! Strafford, you'll not feel shame  
 At being saved by me ?

*Hol.*

All true ! O Strafford,

She saves you ! all her deed ! this lady's deed !  
 And is the boat in readiness ? You, friend,  
 Are Billingsley, no doubt ! Speak to her, Strafford !  
 See how she trembles, waiting for your voice !  
 The world's to learn its bravest story yet !

*Lady Car.* Talk afterward ! Long nights in France  
 enough,

To sit beneath the vines and talk of home !

*Straf.* You love me, child ! Ah, Strafford can be loved  
 As well as Vane ! I could escape, then ?

*Lady Car.* Haste !

Advance the torches, Bryan !

*Straf.* I will die.

They call me proud : but England had no right,  
 When she encountered me — her strength to mine —  
 To find the chosen foe a craven. Girl,  
 I fought her to the utterance, I fell,  
 I am hers now, and I will die. Beside,  
 The lookers-on ! Eliot is all about  
 This place with his most uncomplaining brow.

*Lady Car.* Strafford !

*Straf.* I think if you could know how much  
 I love you, you would be repaid, my friend !

*Lady Car.* Then, for my sake !

*Straf.* Even for your sweet sake,  
 I stay.

*Hol.* For *their* sake !

*Straf.* To bequeath a stain ?  
 Leave me ! Girl, humor me and let me die !

*Lady Car.* Bid him escape — wake, King ! Bid him escape !

*Straf.* True, I will go ! Die, and forsake the King ? I'll not draw back from the last service.

*Lady Car.* Strafford !

*Straf.* And, after all, what is disgrace to me ? Let us come, child ! That it should end this way ! Lead then ! but I feel strangely : it was not To end this way.

*Lady Car.* Lean — lean on me !

*Straf.* My King ! Oh, had he trusted me — his friend of friends ! —

*Lady Car.* I can support him, Hollis !

*Straf.* Not this way ! This gate — I dreamed of it, this very gate.

*Lady Car.* It opens on the river : our good boat Is moored below, our friends are there.

*Straf.* The same. Only with something ominous and dark, Fatal, inevitable.

*Lady Car.* Strafford ! Strafford !

*Straf.* Not by this gate ! I feel what will be there ! I dreamed of it, I tell you : touch it not !

*Lady Car.* To save the King, — Strafford, to save the King !

[As STRAFFORD opens the door, PYM is discovered with HAMPDEN, VANE, etc. STRAFFORD falls back : PYM follows slowly and confronts him.

*Pym.* Have I done well ? Speak, England ! Whose sole sake

I still have labored for, with disregard  
To my own heart,—for whom my youth was made  
Barren, my Future waste, to offer up  
Her sacrifice — this man, this Wentworth here —  
Who walked in youth with me, loved me, it may be,  
And whom, for his forsaking England's cause,  
I hunted by all means (trusting that she  
Would sanctify all means) even to the block  
Which waits for him. And saying this, I feel  
No bitterer pang than first I felt, the hour  
I swore that Wentworth might leave us, but I  
Would never leave him : I do leave him now.  
I render up my charge (be witness, God !)  
To England who imposed it. I have done  
Her bidding — poorly, wrongly, — it may be,  
With ill effects — for I am weak, a man :  
Still, I have done my best, my human best,  
Not faltering for a moment. It is done.  
And this said, if I say . . . yes, I will say  
I never loved but one man — David not  
More Jonathan ! Even thus, I love him now :  
And look for my chief portion in that world  
Where great hearts led astray are turned again,  
(Soon it may be, and, certes, will be soon :  
My mission over, I shall not live long.) —  
Ay, here I know I talk — I dare and must,  
Of England, and her great reward, as all  
I look for there ; but in my inmost heart,  
Believe, I think of stealing quite away

To walk once more with Wentworth — my youth's friend  
 Purged from all error, gloriously renewed,  
 And Eliot shall not blame us. Then indeed . . .  
 This is no meeting, Wentworth! Tears increase  
 Too hot. A thin mist — is it blood? — enwraps  
 The face I loved once. Then, the meeting be!

*Straf.* I have loved England too; we 'll meet then,  
 Pym!

As well die now! Youth is the only time  
 To think and to decide on a great course:  
 Manhood with action follows; but 't is dreary  
 To have to alter our whole life in age —  
 The time past, the strength gone! as well die now.  
 When we meet, Pym, I 'd be set right — not now!  
 Best die. Then if there 's any fault, it too  
 Dies, smothered up. Poor gray old little Laud  
 May dream his dream out of a perfect Church  
 In some blind corner. And there 's no one left.  
 I trust the King now wholly to you, Pym!  
 And yet, I know not! I shall not be there!  
 Friends fail — if he have any! And he 's weak,  
 And loves the Queen, and . . O, my fate is nothing —  
 Nothing! But not that awful head — not that!  
 Pym, you help England! I, that am to die,  
 What I must see! 't is here — all here! My God!  
 Let me but gasp out, in one word of fire,  
 How Thou wilt plague him, satiating Hell!  
 What? England that you help, become through you  
 A green and putrefying charnel, left

Our children . . . some of us have children, Pym —  
Some who, without that, still must ever wear  
A darkened brow, an over-serious look,  
And never properly be young! No word?  
You will not say a word — to me — to Him?

*Pym.* England, — I am thine own! Dost thou exact  
That service? I obey thee to the end.

# CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY.

FLORENCE, 1850.



## CHRISTMAS-EVE.

---

### I.

OUT of the little chapel I flung,  
Into the fresh night-air again.  
Five minutes I waited, held my tongue  
In the doorway, to escape the rain  
That drove in gusts down the common's centre,  
At the edge of which the chapel stands,  
Before I plucked up heart to enter.  
Heaven knows how many sorts of hands  
Reached past me, groping for the latch  
Of the inner door that hung on catch,  
More obstinate the more they fumbled,  
Till, giving way at last with a scold  
Of the crazy hinge, in squeezed or tumbled  
One sheep more to the rest in fold,  
And left me irresolute, standing sentry  
In the sheepfold's lath-and-plaster entry,  
Four feet long by two feet wide,  
Partitioned off from the vast inside —  
I blocked up half of it at least.  
No remedy; the rain kept driving.  
They eyed me much as some wild beast,

That congregation, still arriving,  
Some of them by the main road, white  
A long way past me into the night,  
Skirting the common, then diverging ;  
Not a few suddenly emerging  
From the common's self thro' the paling-gaps,  
— They house in the gravel-pits perhaps,  
Where the road stops short with its safeguard border  
Of lamps, as tired of such disorder ;—  
But the most turned in yet more abruptly  
From a certain squalid knot of alleys,  
Where the town's bad blood once slept corruptly,  
Which now the little chapel rallies  
And leads into day again, — its priestliness  
Lending itself to hide their beastliness  
So cleverly (thanks in part to the mason),  
And putting so cheery a whitewashed face on  
Those neophytes too much in lack of it,  
That, where you cross the common as I did,  
And meet the party thus presided,  
“ Mount Zion ” with Love-lane at the back of it,  
They front you as little disconcerted  
As, bound for the hills, her fate averted,  
And her wicked people made to mind him,  
Lot might have marched with Gomorrah behind him.

## II.

Well, from the road, the lanes or the common,  
In came the flock : the fat weary woman,

Panting and bewildered, down-clapping  
Her umbrella with a mighty report,  
Grounded it by me, wry and flapping,  
A wreck of whalebones ; then, with a snort,  
Like a startled horse, at the interloper  
(Who humbly knew himself improper,  
But could not shrink up small enough)  
— Round to the door, and in,— the gruff  
Hinge's invariable scold  
Making my very blood run cold.  
Prompt in the wake of her, up-pattered  
On broken clogs, the many-tattered  
Little old-faced, peaking, sister-turned-mother  
Of the sickly babe she tried to smother  
Somehow up, with its spotted face,  
From the cold, on her breast, the one warm place ;  
She too must stop, wring the poor ends dry  
Of a draggled shawl, and add thereby  
Her tribute to the door-mat, sopping  
Already from my own clothes' dropping,  
Which yet she seemed to grudge I should stand on ;  
Then, stooping down to take off her pattens,  
She bore them defiantly, in each hand one,  
Planted together before her breast  
And its babe, as good as a lance in rest.  
Close on her heels, the dingy satins  
Of a female something, past me flitted,  
With lips as much too white, as a streak  
Lay far too red on each hollow cheek ;

And it seemed the very door-hinge pitied  
All that was left of a woman once,  
Holding at least its tongue for the nonce.  
Then a tall yellow man, like the Penitent Thief,  
With his jaw bound up in a handkerchief,  
And eyelids screwed together tight,  
Led himself in by some inner light.  
And, except from him, from each that entered,  
I got the same interrogation —  
“ What, you, the alien, you have ventured  
To take with us, the elect, your station ?  
A carer for none of it, a Gallio ? ” —  
Thus, plain as print, I read the glance  
At a common prey, in each countenance  
As of huntsmen giving his hounds the tallyho.  
And, when the door’s cry drowned their wonder,  
The draught, it always sent in shutting,  
Made the flame of the single tallow candle  
In the cracked square lantern I stood under,  
Shoot its blue lip at me, rebutting,  
As it were, the luckless cause of scandal :  
I verily fancied the zealous light,  
(In the chapel’s secret, too !) for spite  
Would shudder itself clean off the wick,  
With the airs of a Saint John’s Candlestick.  
There was no standing it much longer.  
“ Good folks,” thought I, as resolve grew stronger,  
“ This way you perform the Grand-Inquisitor,  
When the weather sends you a chance visitor ?

You are the men, and wisdom shall die with you,  
And none of the old Seven Churches vie with you !  
But still, despite the pretty perfection  
To which you carry your trick of exclusiveness,  
And, taking God's word under wise protection,  
Correct its tendency to diffusiveness,  
And bid one reach it over hot ploughshares, —  
Still, as I say, though you 've found salvation,  
If I should choose to cry, as now, 'Shares' ! —  
See if the best of you bars me my ration !  
I prefer, if you please, for my expounder  
Of the laws of the feast, the feast's own Founder ;  
Mine's the same right with your poorest and sickliest,  
Supposing I don the marriage-vestiment :  
So, shut your mouth and open your Testament,  
And carve me my portion at your quickliest ! ”  
Accordingly, as a shoemaker's lad  
With wizened face in want of soap,  
And wet apron wound round his waist like a rope,  
(After stopping outside, for his cough was bad,  
To get the fit over, poor gentle creature,  
And so avoid disturbing the preacher)  
— Passed in, I sent my elbow spikewise  
At the shutting door, and entered likewise,  
Received the hinge's accustomed greeting,  
And crossed the threshold's magic pentacle,  
And found myself in full conventicle,  
— To wit, in Zion Chapel Meeting,  
On the Christmas-Eve of 'Forty-nine,

Which, calling its flock to their special clover,  
Found all assembled and one sheep over,  
Whose lot, as the weather pleased, was mine.

## III.

I very soon had enough of it.  
The hot smell and the human noises,  
And my neighbor's coat, the greasy cuff of it,  
Were a pebble-stone that a child's hand poises,  
Compared with the pig-of-lead-like pressure  
Of the preaching-man's immense stupidity,  
As he poured his doctrine forth, full measure,  
To meet his audience's avidity.  
You needed not the wit of the Sibyl  
To guess the cause of it all, in a twinkling :  
No sooner got our friend an inkling  
Of treasure hid in the Holy Bible,  
(Whene'er 't was that the thought first struck him,  
How death, at unawares, might duck him  
Deeper than the grave, and quench  
The gin-shop's light in Hell's grim drench)  
Than he handled it so, in fine irreverence,  
As to hug the book of books to pieces :  
And, a patchwork of chapters and texts in severance,  
Not improved by the private dog's-ears and creases,  
Having clothed his own soul with, he 'd, fain see equipt  
yours, —  
So, tossed you again your Holy Scriptures.  
And you picked them up, in a sense, no doubt :

Nay, had but a single face of my neighbors  
Appeared to suspect that the preacher's labors  
Were help which the world could be saved without,  
'T is odds but I might have borne in quiet  
A qualm or two at my spiritual diet,  
Or (who can tell?) perchance even mustered  
Somewhat to urge in behalf of the sermon :  
But the flock sat on, divinely flustered,  
Sniffing, methought, its dew of Hermon  
With such content in every snuffle,  
As the devil inside us loves to ruffle.  
My old fat woman purred with pleasure,  
And thumb round thumb went twirling faster,  
While she, to his periods keeping measure,  
Maternally devoured the pastor.  
The man with the handkerchief, untied it,  
Showed us a horrible wen inside it,  
Gave his eyelids yet another screwing,  
And rocked himself as the woman was doing.  
The shoemaker's lad, discreetly choking,  
Kept down his cough. 'T was too provoking !  
My gorge rose at the nonsense and stuff of it,  
So, saying, like Eve when she plucked the apple,  
"I wanted a taste, and now there's enough of it,"  
I flung out of the little chapel.

## IV.

There was a lull in the rain, a lull  
In the wind too ; the moon was risen,

And would have shone out pure and full,  
But for the rampart cloud-prison,  
Block on block built up in the West,  
For what purpose the wind knows best,  
Who changes his mind continually.

And the empty other half of the sky  
Seemed in its silence as if it knew  
What, any moment, might look through  
A chance-gap in that fortress massy :—  
Through its fissures you got hints  
Of the flying moon, by the shifting tints,  
Now, a dull lion-color, now, brassy  
Burning to yellow, and whitest yellow,  
Like furnace-smoke just ere the flames bellow,  
All a-simmer with intense strain  
To let her through,— then blank again,  
At the hope of her appearance failing.

Just by the chapel, a break in the railing  
Shows a narrow path directly across ;  
'T is ever dry walking there, on the moss —  
Besides, you go gently all the way uphill.  
I stooped under and soon felt better ;  
My head grew light, my limbs more supple,  
As I walked on, glad to have slipt the fetter.  
My mind was full of the scene I had left,  
That placid flock, that pastor vociferant,  
— How this outside was pure and different !  
The sermon, now — what a mingled weft  
Of good and ill ! were either less,

Its fellow had colored the whole distinctly ;  
But alas for the excellent earnestness,  
And the truths, quite true if stated succinctly,  
But as surely false, in their quaint presentment,  
However to pastor and flock's contentment !  
Say rather, such truths looked false to your eyes,  
With his provings and parallels twisted and twined,  
Till how could you know them, grown double their size  
In the natural fog of the good man's mind,  
Like yonder spots of our roadside lamps  
Haloed about with the common's damps ?  
Truth remains true, the fault's in the prover ;  
The zeal was good, and the aspiration ;  
And yet, and yet, yet, fifty times over,  
Pharaoh received no demonstration  
By his Baker's dream of Baskets Three,  
Of the doctrine of the Trinity, —  
Although, as our preacher thus embellished it,  
Apparently his hearers relished it  
With so unfeigned a gust — who knows if  
They did not prefer our friend to Joseph ?  
But so it is everywhere, one way with all of them !  
These people have really felt, no doubt,  
A something, the motion they style the Call of them ;  
And this is their method of bringing about,  
By a mechanism of words and tones,  
(So many texts in so many groans)  
A sort of reviving or reproducing,  
More or less perfectly, (who can tell ? —)

Of the mood itself, that strengthens by using ;  
And how it happens, I understand well.  
A tune was born in my head last week,  
Out of the thump-thump and shriek-shriek  
Of the train, as I came by it, up from Manchester ;  
And when, next week, I take it back again,  
My head will sing to the engine's clack again,  
While it only makes my neighbor's haunches stir,  
— Finding no dormant musical sprout  
In him, as in me, to be jolted out.  
'T is the taught already that profits by teaching ;  
He gets no more from the railway's preaching  
Than, from this preacher who does the rail's office, I ;  
Whom therefore the flock cast a jealous eye on.  
Still, why paint over their door " Mount Zion,"  
To which all flesh shall come, saith the prophecy ?

## v.

But wherefore be harsh on a single case ?  
After how many modes, this Christmas-Eve,  
Does the selfsame weary thing take place ?  
The same endeavor to make you believe,  
And with much the same effect, no more :  
Each method abundantly convincing,  
As I say, to those convinced before,  
But scarce to be swallowed without wincing,  
By the not-as-yet-convinced. For me,  
I have my own church equally :  
And in *this* church my faith sprang first !

(I said, as I reached the rising ground,  
And the wind began again, with a burst  
Of rain in my face, and a glad rebound  
From the heart beneath, as if, God speeding me,  
I entered His church-door, Nature leading me)

— In youth I looked to these very skies,  
And probing their immensities,  
I found God there, His visible power ;  
Yet felt in my heart, amid all its sense  
Of that power, an equal evidence  
That His love, there too, was the nobler dower.  
For the loving worm within its clod,  
Were diviner than a loveless god  
Amid his worlds, I will dare to say.

You know what I mean : God 's all, man 's naught :  
But also, God, whose pleasure brought  
Man into being, stands away

As it were, a handbreadth off, to give  
Room for the newly-made to live,  
And look at Him from a place apart,  
And use His gifts of brain and heart,  
Given, indeed, but to keep forever.

Who speaks of man, then, must not sever  
Man's very elements from man,  
Saying, “ But all is God's ” — whose plan  
Was to create man and then leave him  
Able, His own word saith, to grieve Him,  
But able to glorify Him too,  
As a mere machine could never do,

That prayed or praised, all unaware  
Of its fitness for aught but praise and prayer,  
Made perfect as a thing of course.  
Man, therefore, stands on his own stock  
Of love and power as a pin-point rock,  
And, looking to God who ordained divorce  
Of the rock from His boundless continent,  
Sees, in His power made evident,  
Only excess by a million-fold  
O'er the power God gave man in the mould.  
For, note: man's hand, first formed to carry  
A few pounds' weight, when taught to marry  
Its strength with an engine's, lifts a mountain,  
— Advancing in power by one degree;  
And why count steps through eternity?  
But love is the ever-springing fountain:  
Man may enlarge or narrow his bed  
For the water's play, but the water-head —  
How can he multiply or reduce it?  
As easy create it, as cause it to cease;  
He may profit by it, or abuse it,  
But 't is not a thing to bear increase  
As power does: be love less or more  
In the heart of man, he keeps it shut  
Or opes it wide, as he pleases, but  
Love's sum remains what it was before.  
So, gazing up, in my youth, at love  
As seen through power, ever above  
All modes which make it manifest,

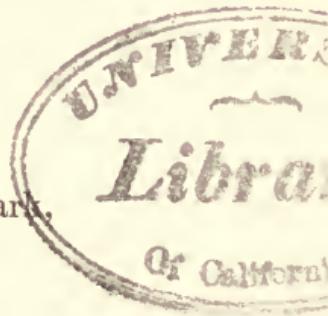
My soul brought all to a single test —  
 That He, the Eternal First and Last,  
 Who, in His power, had so surpassed  
 All man conceives of what is might, —  
 Whose wisdom, too, showed infinite,  
 — Would prove as infinitely good ;  
 Would never, (my soul understood,)  
 With power to work all love desires,  
 Bestow e'en less than man requires :  
 That He who endlessly was teaching,  
 Above my spirit's utmost reaching,  
 What love can do in the leaf or stone,  
 (So that to master this alone,  
 This done in the stone or leaf for me,  
 I must go on learning endlessly)  
 Would never need that I, in turn,  
 Should point him out a defect unheeded,  
 And show that God had yet to learn  
 What the meanest human creature needed, —  
 — Not life, to wit, for a few short years,  
 Tracking His way through doubts and fears,  
 While the stupid earth on which I stay  
 Suffers no change, but passive adds  
 Its myriad years to myriads,  
 Though I, He gave it to, decay,  
 Seeing death come and choose about me,  
 And my dearest ones depart without me.  
 No ! love which, on earth, amid all the shows of it,  
 Has ever been seen the sole good of life in it,

The love, ever growing there, spite of the strife in it,  
Shall arise, made perfect, from death's repose of it !  
And I shall behold Thee, face to face,  
O God, and in Thy light retrace  
How in all I loved here, still wast Thou !  
Whom pressing to, then, as I fain would now,  
I shall find as able to satiate  
The love, Thy gift, as my spirit's wonder  
Thou art able to quicken and sublimate,  
With this sky of Thine, that I now walk under,  
And glory in Thee for, as I gaze  
Thus, thus ! oh, let men keep their ways  
Of seeking Thee in a narrow shrine —  
Be this my way ! And this *is* mine !

## VI.

For lo, what think you ? suddenly  
The rain and the wind ceased, and the sky  
Received at once the full fruition  
Of the moon's consummate apparition.  
The black cloud-barricade was riven,  
Ruined beneath her feet, and driven  
Deep in the West ; while, bare and breathless,  
North and South and East lay ready  
For a glorious Thing, that, dauntless, deathless,  
Sprang across them, and stood steady.  
'T was a moon-rainbow, vast and perfect,  
From heaven to heaven extending, perfect  
As the mother-moon's self, full in face.

It rose, distinctly at the base  
 With its seven proper colors chorded,  
 Which still, in the rising, were compressed,  
 Until at last they coälesced,  
 And supreme the spectral creature lorded  
 In a triumph of whitest white, —  
 Above which intervened the night.  
 But above night too, like only the next,  
 The second of a wondrous sequence,  
 Reaching in rare and rarer frequence,  
 Till the heaven of heavens were circumflext,  
 Another rainbow rose, a mightier,  
 Fainter, flushier, and flightier, —  
 Rapture dying along its verge !  
 Oh, whose foot shall I see emerge,  
 WHOSE, from the straining topmost dark,  
 On to the keystone of that arc ?



## VII.

This sight was shown me, there and then, —  
 Me, one out of a world of men,  
 Singled forth, as the chance might hap  
 To another, if in a thunderclap  
 Where I heard noise, and you saw flame,  
 Some one man knew God called his name.  
 For me, I think I said, " Appear !  
 Good were it to be ever here.  
 If Thou wilt, let me build to Thee  
 Service tabernacles Three,

Where, forever in Thy presence,  
In ecstatic acquiescence,  
Far alike from thriftless learning  
And ignorance's undiscerning,  
I may worship and remain!"

Thus, at the show above me, gazing  
With upturned eyes, I felt my brain  
Glutted with the glory, blazing  
Throughout its whole mass, over and under,  
Until at length it burst asunder,  
And out of it bodily there streamed  
The too-much glory, as it seemed,  
Passing from out me to the ground,  
Then palely serpentine round  
Into the dark with mazy error.

## VIII.

All at once I looked up with terror.  
He was there.  
He Himself with His human air,  
On the narrow pathway, just before.  
I saw the back of Him, no more—  
He had left the chapel, then, as I.  
I forgot all about the sky.  
No face: only the sight  
Of a sweepy garment, vast and white,  
With a hem that I could recognize.  
I felt terror, no surprise:  
My mind filled with the cataract,

At one bound, of the mighty fact.  
I remembered, He did say  
Doubtless, that, to this world's end,  
Where two or three should meet and pray,  
He would-be in the midst, their friend :  
Certainly He was there with them.  
And my pulses leaped for joy  
Of the golden thought without alloy,  
That I saw His very vesture's hem.  
Then rushed the blood back, cold and clear  
With a fresh enhancing shiver of fear,  
And I hastened, cried out while I pressed  
To the salvation of the vest,  
" But not so, Lord ! It cannot be  
That Thou, indeed, art leaving me —  
Me, that have despised Thy friends. . .  
Did my heart make no amends ?  
Thou art the love of God — above  
His power, didst hear me place His love,  
And that was leaving the world for Thee.  
Therefore Thou must not turn from me  
As if I had chosen the other part.  
Folly and pride o'ercame my heart.  
Our best is bad, nor bears Thy test ;  
Still, it should be our very best.  
I thought it best that Thou, the Spirit,  
Be worshipped in spirit and in truth,  
And in beauty, as even we require it —  
Not in the forms burlesque, uncouth,

I left but now, as scarcely fitted  
For Thee : I knew not what I pitied.  
But, all I felt there, right or wrong,  
What is it to Thee, who curest sinning ?  
Am I not weak as Thou art strong ?  
I have looked to Thee from the beginning,  
Straight up to Thee through all the world  
Which, like an idle scroll, lay furled  
To nothingness on either side :  
And since the time Thou wast descried,  
Spite of the weak heart, so have I  
Lived ever, and so fain would die,  
Living and dying, Thee before !  
But if Thou leavest me — ”

## IX.

## Less or more,

I suppose that I spoke thus.  
When, — have mercy, Lord, on us !  
The whole Face turned upon me full.  
And I spread myself beneath it,  
As when the bleacher spreads, to seethe it  
In the cleansing sun, his wool, —  
Steeps in the flood of noontide whiteness  
Some defiled, discolored web —  
So lay I, saturate with brightness.  
And when the flood appeared to ebb,  
Lo, I was walking, light and swift,  
With my senses settling fast and steadyng,

But my body caught up in the whirl and drift  
Of the vesture's amplitude, still eddying  
On, just before me, still to be followed,  
As it carried me after with its motion :  
What shall I say ? — as a path were hollowed  
And a man went weltering through the ocean,  
Sucked along in the flying wake  
Of the luminous water-snake.  
Darkness and cold were cloven, as through  
I passed, upborne yet walking too.  
And I turned to myself at intervals, —  
“ So He said, and so it befalls.  
God who registers the cup  
Of mere cold water, for His sake  
To a disciple rendered up,  
Disdains not His own thirst to slake.  
At the poorest love was ever offered :  
And because it was my heart I proffered,  
With true love trembling at the brim,  
He suffers me to follow Him  
Forever, my own way, — dispensed  
From seeking to be influenced  
By all the less immediate ways  
That earth, in worships manifold,  
Adopts to reach, by prayer and praise,  
The garment's hem, which, lo, I hold ! ”

## X.

And so we crossed the world and stopped.  
For where am I, in city or plain,

Since I am 'ware of the world again ?  
And what is this that rises propped  
With pillars of prodigious girth ?  
Is it really on the earth,  
This miraculous Dome of God ?  
Has the angel's measuring-rod  
Which numbered cubits, gem from gem,  
'Twixt the gates of the New Jerusalem,  
Meted it out,— and what he meted,  
Have the sons of men completed ?  
— Binding, ever as he bade,  
Columns in this colonnade  
With arms wide open to embrace  
The entry of the human race  
To the breast of . . . what is it, yon building,  
Ablaze in front, all paint and gilding,  
With marble for brick, and stones of price  
For garniture of the edifice ?  
Now I see ; it is no dream ;  
It stands there and it does not seem :  
Forever, in pictures, thus it looks,  
And thus I have read of it in books  
Often in England, leagues away,  
And wondered how these fountains play,  
Growing up eternally  
Each to a musical water-tree,  
Whose blossoms drop, a glittering boon,  
Before my eyes, in the light of the moon,  
To the granite lavers underneath.

Liar and dreamer in your teeth !  
I, the sinner that speak to you,  
Was in Rome this night, and stood, and knew  
Both this and more. For see, for see,  
The dark is rent, mine eye is free  
To pierce the crust of the outer wall,  
And I view inside, and all there, all,  
As the swarming hollow of a hive,  
The whole Basilica alive !  
Men in the chancel, body, and nave,  
Men on the pillars' architrave,  
Men on the statues, men on the tombs  
With popes and kings in their porphyry wombs,  
All famishing in expectation  
Of the main-altar's consummation.  
For see, for see, the rapturous moment  
Approaches, and earth's best endowment  
Blends with Heaven's ; the taper-fires  
Pant up, the winding brazen spires  
Heave loftier yet the baldachin ;  
The incense-gaspings, long kept in,  
Suspire in clouds ; the organ blatant  
Holds his breath and grovels latent,  
As if God's hushing finger grazed him,  
(Like Behemoth when He praised him)  
At the silver bell's shrill tinkling,  
Quick cold drops of terror sprinkling  
On the sudden pavement strewed  
With faces of the multitude.

Earth breaks up, time drops away,  
In flows Heaven, with its new day  
Of endless life, when He who trod,  
Very Man and very God,  
This earth in weakness, shame and pain,  
Dying the death whose signs remain  
Up yonder on the accursed tree,—  
Shall come again, no more to be  
Of captivity the thrall,  
But the one God, All in all,  
King of kings, Lord of lords,  
As His servant John received the words,  
“I died, and live forevermore!”

## XI.

Yet I was left outside the door.  
Why sat I there on the threshold-stone,  
Left till He return, alone  
Save for the garment’s extreme fold  
Abandoned still to bless my hold?—  
My reason, to my doubt, replied,  
As if a book were opened wide,  
And at a certain page I traced  
Every record undefaced,  
Added by successive years,—  
The harvestings of truth’s stray ears  
Singly gleaned, and in one sheaf  
Bound together for belief.  
Yes, I said — that He will go

And sit with these in turn, I know.  
Their faith's heart beats, though her head swims  
Too giddily to guide her limbs,  
Disabled by their palsy-stroke  
From propping me. Though Rome's gross yoke  
Drops off, no more to be endured,  
Her teaching is not so obscured  
By errors and perversities,  
That no truth shines athwart the lies :  
And He, whose eye detects a spark  
Even where, to man's, the whole seems dark,  
May well see flame where each beholder  
Acknowledges the embers smoulder.  
But I, a mere man, fear to quit  
The clew God gave me as most fit  
To guide my footsteps through life's maze,  
Because Himself discerns all ways  
Open to reach Him : I, a man  
Able to mark where faith began  
To swerve aside, till from its summit  
Judgment drops her damning plummet,  
Pronouncing such a fatal space  
Departed from the Founder's base :  
He will not bid me enter too,  
But rather sit, as now I do,  
Awaiting His return outside.  
— 'T was thus my reason straight replied,  
And joyously I turned, and pressed  
The garment's skirt upon my breast,

Until, afresh its light suffusing me,  
My heart cried, — what has been abusing me  
That I should wait here lonely and coldly,  
Instead of rising, entering boldly,  
Baring truth's face, and letting drift  
Her veils of lies as they choose to shift?  
Do these men praise Him? I will raise  
My voice up to their point of praise!  
I see the error; but above  
The scope of error, see the love. —  
O, love of those first Christian days!  
— Fanned so soon into a blaze,  
From the spark preserved by the trampled sect,  
That the antique sovereign Intellect  
Which then sat ruling in the world,  
Like a change in dreams, was hurled  
From the throne he reigned upon:  
— You looked up, and he was gone!  
Gone, his glory of the pen!  
— Love, with Greece and Rome in ken,  
Bade her scribes abhor the trick  
Of poetry and rhetoric,  
And exult, with hearts set free,  
In blessed imbecility  
Scrawled, perchance, on some torn sheet,  
Leaving Sallust incomplete.  
Gone, his pride of sculptor, painter!  
— Love, while able to acquaint her  
With the thousand statues yet

Fresh from chisel, pictures wet  
From brush, she saw on every side,  
Chose rather with an infant's pride  
To frame those portents which impart  
Such unction to true Christian Art.  
Gone, music too! The air was stirred  
By happy wings : Terpander's bird ➤  
(That, when the cold came, fled away)  
Would tarry not the wintry day, —  
As more-enduring sculpture must,  
Till a filthy saint rebuked the gust  
With which he chanced to get a sight  
Of some dear naked Aphrodite  
He glanced a thought above the toes of,  
By breaking zealously her nose off.  
Love, surely, from that music's lingering,  
Might have filched her organ-fingering,  
Nor chosen rather to set prayings  
To hog-grunts, praises to horse-neighings.  
Love was the startling thing, the new ;  
Love was the all-sufficient too ;  
And seeing that, you see the rest :  
As a babe can find its mother's breast  
As well in darkness as in light,  
Love shut our eyes, and all seemed right.  
True, the world's eyes are open now :  
— Less need for me to disallow  
Some few that keep Love's zone unbuckled,  
Peevish as ever to be suckled,

Lulled by the same old baby-prattle  
With intermixture of the rattle,  
When she would have them creep, stand steady  
Upon their feet, or walk already,  
Not to speak of trying to climb.  
I will be wise another time,  
And not desire a wall between us,  
When next I see a church-roof cover  
So many species of one genus,  
All with foreheads bearing *Lover*  
Written above the earnest eyes of them ;  
All with breasts that beat for beauty,  
Whether sublimed, to the surprise of them,  
In noble daring, steadfast duty,  
The heroic in passion, or in action, —  
Or, lowered for the senses' satisfaction,  
To the mere outside of human creatures,  
Mere perfect form and faultless features.  
What? with all Rome here, whence to levy  
Such contributions to their appetite,  
With women and men in a gorgeous bevy,  
They take, as it were, a padlock, and it tight  
On their southern eyes, restrained from feeding  
On the glories of their ancient reading,  
On the beauties of their modern singing,  
On the wonders of the builder's bringing,  
On the majesties of Art around them, —  
And, all these loves, late struggling incessant,  
When faith has at last united and bound them,

They offer up to God for a present?  
Why, I will, on the whole, be rather proud of it,—  
And, only taking the act in reference  
To the other recipients who might have allowed of it,  
I will rejoice that God had the preference.

## XII.

So I summed up my new resolves :  
Too much love there can never be.  
And where the intellect devolves  
Its function on love exclusively,  
I, a man who possesses both,  
Will accept the provision, nothing loath,  
— Will feast my love, then depart elsewhere,  
That my intellect may find its share.  
And ponder, O soul, the while thou departest,  
And see thou applaud the great heart of the artist,  
Who, examining the capabilities  
Of the block of marble he has to fashion  
Into a type of thought or passion,—  
Not always, using obvious facilities,  
Shapes it, as any artist can,  
Into a perfect symmetrical man,  
Complete from head to foot of the life-size,  
Such as old Adam stood in his wife's eyes,—  
But, now and then, bravely aspires to consummate  
A Colossus by no means so easy to come at,  
And uses the whole of his block for the bust,  
Leaving the minds of the public to finish it,

Since cut it ruefully short he must :  
On the face alone he expends his devotion,  
He rather would mar than resolve to diminish it,  
— Saying, “ Applaud me for this grand notion  
Of what a face may be ! As for completing it  
In breast and body and limbs, do *that*, you ! ”  
All hail ! I fancy how, happily meeting it,  
A trunk and legs would perfect the statue,  
Could man carve so as to answer volition.  
And how much nobler than petty cavils,  
Were a hope to find, in my spirit-travels,  
Some artist of another ambition,  
Who having a block to carve, no bigger,  
Has spent his power on the opposite quest,  
And believed to begin at the feet was best —  
For so may I see, ere I die, the whole figure !

## XIII.

No sooner said than out in the night !  
My heart beat lighter and more light :  
And still, as before, I was walking swift,  
With my senses settling fast and steadyng,  
But my body caught up in the whirl and drift  
Of the vesture’s amplitude, still eddying  
On just before me, still to be followed,  
As it carried me after with its motion,  
— What shall I say ? — as a path were hollowed,  
And a man went weltering through the ocean,  
Sucked along in the flying wake  
Of the luminous water-snake.

## XIV.

Alone ! I am left alone once more —  
(Save for the garment's extreme fold  
Abandoned still to bless my hold)  
Alone, beside the entrance-door  
Of a sort of temple, — perhaps a college,  
— Like nothing I ever saw before  
At home in England, to my knowledge.  
The tall, old, quaint, irregular town !  
It may be . . . though *which*, I can't affirm . . . any  
Of the famous middle-age towns of Germany ;  
And this flight of stairs where I sit down,  
Is it Halle, Weimar, Cassel, or Frankfort,  
Or Göttingen, that I have to thank for 't ?  
It may be Göttingen, — most likely.  
Through the open door I catch obliquely  
Glimpses of a lecture-hall ;  
And not a bad assembly neither —  
Ranged decent and symmetrical  
On benches, waiting what 's to see there ;  
Which, holding still by the vesture's hem,  
I also resolve to see with them,  
Cautious this time how I suffer to slip  
The chance of joining in fellowship  
With any that call themselves His friends,  
As these folks do, I have a notion.  
But hist — a buzzing and emotion !  
All settle themselves, the while ascends

By the creaking rail to the lecture-desk,  
Step by step, deliberate  
Because of his cranium's over-freight,  
Three parts sublime to one grotesque,  
If I have proved an accurate guesser,  
The hawk-nosed, high-cheek-boned Professor.  
I felt at once as if there ran  
A shoot of love from my heart to the man —  
That sallow, virgin-minded, studious  
Martyr to mild enthusiasm,  
As he uttered a kind of cough-preludious  
That woke my sympathetic spasm,  
(Beside some spitting that made me sorry)  
And stood, surveying his auditory  
With a wan pure look, wellnigh celestial, —  
Those blue eyes had survived so much !  
While, under the foot they could not smutch,  
Lay all the fleshly and the bestial.  
Over he bowed, and arranged his notes,  
Till the auditory's clearing of throats  
Was done with, died into a silence ;  
And, when each glance was upward sent,  
Each bearded mouth composed intent,  
And a pin might be heard drop half a mile hence, —  
He pushed back higher his spectacles,  
Let the eyes stream out like lamps from cells,  
And giving his head of hair — a hake  
Of undressed tow, for color and quantity —  
One rapid and impatient shake,

(As our own young England adjusts a jaunty tie  
When about to impart, on mature digestion,  
Some thrilling view of the surplice-question)  
— The Professor's grave voice, sweet though hoarse,  
Broke into his Christmas-Eve's discourse.

## xv.

And he began it by observing  
How reason dictated that men  
Should rectify the natural swerving,  
By a reversion, now and then,  
To the well-heads of knowledge, few  
And far away, whence rolling grew  
The life-stream wide whereat we drink,  
Commingled, as we needs must think,  
With waters alien to the source ;  
To do which, aimed this eve's discourse :  
Since, where could be a fitter time  
For tracing backward to its prime,  
This Christianity, this lake,  
This reservoir, whereat we slake,  
From one or other bank, our thirst ?  
So, he proposed inquiring first  
Into the various sources whence  
This Myth of Christ is derivable ;  
Demanding from the evidence  
(Since plainly no such life was liveable)  
How these phenomena should class ?  
Whether 't were best opine Christ was,

Or never was at all, or whether  
He was and was not, both together —  
It matters little for the name,  
So the Idea be left the same.  
Only, for practical purpose' sake  
'T was obviously as well to take  
The popular story, — understanding  
How the ineptitude of the time,  
And the penman's prejudice, expanding  
Fact into fable fit for the clime,  
Had, by slow and sure degrees, translated it  
Into this myth, this Individuum, —  
Which, when reason had strained and abated it  
Of foreign matter, gave, for residuum,  
A Man! — a right true man, however,  
Whose work was worthy a man's endeavor ;  
Work, that gave warrant almost sufficient  
To his disciples, for rather believing  
He was just omnipotent and omniscient,  
As it gives to us, for as frankly receiving  
His word, their tradition, — which, though it meant  
Something entirely different  
From all that those who only heard it,  
In their simplicity thought and averred it,  
Had yet a meaning quite as respectable :  
For, among other doctrines delectable,  
Was he not surely the first to insist on  
The natural sovereignty of our race ? —  
Here the lecturer came to a pausing-place.

And while his cough, like a drouthy piston,  
Tried to dislodge the husk that grew to him,  
I seized the occasion of bidding adieu to him,  
The vesture still within my hand.

## XVI.

I could interpret its command.  
This time He would not bid me enter  
The exhausted air-bell of the Critic.  
Truth's atmosphere may grow mephitic  
When Papist struggles with Dissenter,  
Impregnating its pristine clarity,  
— One, by his daily fare's vulgarity,  
Its gust of broken meat and garlic ;  
— One, by his soul's too-much presuming  
To turn the frankincense's fuming  
And vapors of the candle starlike  
Into the cloud her wings she buoys on.  
Each, that thus sets the pure air seething,  
May poison it for healthy breathing —  
But the Critic leaves no air to poison ;  
Pumps out by a ruthless ingenuity  
Atom by atom, and leaves you — vacuity.  
Thus much of Christ, does he reject ?  
And what retain ? His intellect ?  
What is it I must reverence duly ?  
Poor intellect for worship, truly,  
Which tells me simply what was told  
(If mere morality, bereft

Of the God in Christ, be all that's left)  
Elsewhere by voices manifold ;  
With this advantage, that the stater  
Made nowise the important stumble  
Of adding, he, the sage and humble,  
Was also one with the Creator.  
You urge Christ's followers' simplicity :  
But how does shifting blame, evade it ?  
Have wisdom's words no more felicity ?  
The stumbling-block, His speech — who laid it ?  
How comes it that for one found able  
To sift the truth of it from fable,  
Millions believe it to the letter ?  
Christ's goodness, then — does that fare better ?  
Strange goodness, which upon the score  
Of being goodness, the mere due  
Of man to fellow-man, much more  
To God, — should take another view  
Of its possessor's privilege,  
And bid him rule his race ! You pledge  
Your fealty to such rule ? What, all —  
From Heavenly John and Attic Paul,  
And that brave weather-battered Peter  
Whose stout faith only stood completer  
For buffets, sinning to be pardoned,  
As the more his hands hauled nets, they hardened, —  
All, down to you, the man of men,  
Professing here at Göttingen,  
Compose Christ's flock ! They, you and I

Are sheep of a good man ! and why ?  
The goodness, — how did he acquire it ?  
Was it self-gained, did God inspire it ?  
Choose which ; then tell me, on what ground  
Should its possessor dare propound  
His claim to rise o'er us an inch ?  
Were goodness all some man's invention,  
Who arbitrarily made mention  
What we should follow, and where flinch, —  
What qualities might take the style  
Of right and wrong, — and had such guessing  
Met with as general acquiescing  
As graced the Alphabet erewhile,  
When A got leave an Ox to be,  
No Camel (quoth the Jews) like G, —  
For thus inventing thing and title  
Worship were that man's fit requital.  
But if the common conscience must  
Be ultimately judge, adjust  
Its apt name to each quality  
Already known, — I would decree  
Worship for such mere demonstration  
And simple work of nomenclature,  
Only the day I praised, not Nature,  
But Harvey, for the circulation.  
I would praise such a Christ, with pride  
And joy, that he, as none beside,  
Had taught us how to keep the mind  
God gave him, as God gave his kind,

Freer than they from fleshly taint :  
I would call such a Christ our Saint,  
As I declare our Poet, him  
Whose insight makes all others dim :  
A thousand poets pried at life,  
And only one amid the strife  
Rose to be Shakespeare : each shall take  
His crown, I 'd say, for the world's sake —  
Though some objected — " Had we seen  
The heart and head of each, what screen  
Was broken there to give them light,  
While in ourselves it shuts the sight,  
We should no more admire, perchance,  
That these found truth out at a glance,  
Than marvel how the bat discerns  
Some pitch-dark cavern's fifty turns,  
Led by a finer tact, a gift  
He boasts, which other birds must shift  
Without, and grope as best they can."  
No, freely I would praise the man, —  
Nor one whit more, if he contended  
That gift of his, from God, descended.  
Ah, friend, what gift of man's does not ?  
No nearer Something, by a jot,  
Rise an infinity of Nothings  
Than one : take Euclid for your teacher :  
Distinguish kinds : do crownings, clothings,  
Make that Creator which was creature ?  
Multiply gifts upon his head,

And what, when all 's done, shall be said  
 But — the more gifted he, I ween !  
 That one 's made Christ, this other, Pilate,  
 And This might be all That has been, —  
 So what is there to frown or smile at ?  
 What is left for us, save, in growth  
 Of soul, to rise up, far past both,  
 From the gift looking to the Giver,  
 And from the cistern to the River,  
 And from the finite to Infinity,  
 And from man's dust to God's divinity ?

## XVII.

Take all in a word : the truth in God's breast  
 Lies trace for trace upon ours impressed :  
 Though He is so bright and we so dim,  
 We are made in His image to witness Him ;  
 And were no eye in us to tell,  
 Instructed by no inner sense,  
 The light of Heaven from the dark of Hell,  
 That light would want its evidence, —  
 Though Justice, Good and Truth were still  
 Divine, if, by some demon's will,  
 Hatred and wrong had been proclaimed  
 Law through the worlds, and Right misnamed.  
 No mere exposition of morality  
 Made or in part or in totality,  
 Should win you to give it worship, therefore :  
 And, if no better proof you will care for,

— Whom do you count the worst man upon earth ?  
Be sure, he knows, in his conscience, more  
Of what Right is, than arrives at birth  
In the best man's acts that we bow before :  
This last *knows* better — true, but my fact is,  
'T is one thing to know, and another to practise.  
And thence I conclude that the real God-function  
Is to furnish a motive and injunction  
For practising what we know already.  
And such an injunction and such a motive  
As the God in Christ, do you waive, and "heady,  
High-minded," hang your tablet-votive  
Outside the fane on a finger-post ?  
Morality to the uttermost,  
Supreme in Christ as we all confess,  
Why need *we* prove would avail no jot  
To make Him God, if God He were not ?  
What is the point where Himself lays stress ?  
Does the precept run "Believe in Good,  
In Justice, Truth, now understood  
For the first time" ? — or, "Believe in ME,  
Who lived and died, yet essentially  
Am Lord of Life" ? Whoever can take  
The same to his heart and for mere love's sake  
Conceive of the love, — that man obtains  
A new truth ; no conviction gains  
Of an old one only, made intense  
By a fresh appeal to his faded sense.

## XVIII.

Can it be that He stays inside ?  
Is the vesture left me to commune with ?  
Could my soul find aught to sing in tune with  
Even at this lecture, if she tried ?  
O, let me at lowest sympathize  
With the lurking drop of blood that lies  
In the desiccated brain's white roots  
Without a throb for Christ's attributes,  
As the Lecturer makes his special boast !  
If love 's dead there, it has left a ghost.  
Admire we, how from heart to brain  
(Though to say so strike the doctors dumb)  
One instinct rises and falls again,  
Restoring the equilibrium.  
And how when the Critic had done his best,  
And the Pearl of Price, at reason's test,  
Lay dust and ashes levigable  
On the Professor's lecture-table ;  
When we looked for the inference and monition  
That our faith, reduced to such a condition,  
Be swept forthwith to its natural dust-hole, —  
He bids us, when we least expect it,  
Take back our faith, — if it be not just whole,  
Yet a pearl indeed, as his tests affect it,  
Which fact pays the damage done rewardingly,  
So, prize we our dust and ashes accordingly !  
“ Go home and venerate the Myth

I thus have experimented with—  
This Man, continue to adore him  
Rather than all who went before him,  
And all who ever followed after !”—  
Surely for this I may praise you, my brother !  
Will you take the praise in tears or laughter ?  
That 's one point gained: can I compass another ?  
Unlearned love was safe from spurning—  
Can't we respect your loveless learning ?  
Let us at least give Learning honor !  
What laurels had we showered upon her,  
Girding her loins up to perturb  
Our theory of the Middle Verb;  
Or Turk-like brandishing a scimitar  
O'er anapæsts in comic-trimeter ;  
Or curing the halt and maimed Iketides,  
While we lounged on at our indebted ease :  
Instead of which, a tricksy demon  
Sets her at Titus or Philemon !  
When Ignorance wags his ears of leather  
And hates God's word, 't is altogether ;  
Nor leaves he his congenial thistles  
To go and browse on Paul's Epistles.  
— And you, the audience, who might ravage  
The world wide, enviably savage,  
Nor heed the cry of the retriever,  
More than Herr Heine (before his fever),—  
I do not tell a lie so arrant  
As say my passion's wings are furled up;

And, without the plainest Heavenly warrant,  
I were ready and glad to give this world up —  
But still, when you rub the brow meticulous,  
And ponder the profit of turning holy  
If not for God's, for your own sake solely,  
— God forbid I should find you ridiculous !  
Deduce from this lecture all that eases you,  
Nay, call yourselves, if the calling pleases you,  
"Christians," — abhor the Deist's pravity, —  
Go on, you shall no more move my gravity,  
Than, when I see boys ride a-cockhorse  
I find it in my heart to embarrass them  
By hinting that their stick 's a mock horse,  
And they really carry what they say carries them.

## XIX.

So sat I talking with my mind.  
I did not long to leave the door  
And find a new church, as before,  
But rather was quiet and inclined  
To prolong and enjoy the gentle resting  
From further tracking and trying and testing.  
This tolerance is a genial mood !  
(Said I, and a little pause ensued).  
One trims the bark 'twixt shoal and shelf,  
And sees, each side, the good effects of it,  
A value for religion's self,  
A carelessness about the sects of it.  
Let me enjoy my own conviction,

Not watch my neighbor's faith with fretfulness  
Still spying there some dereliction  
Of truth, perversity, forgetfulness !  
Better a mild indifferentism,  
Teaching that all our faiths (though duller  
His shine through a dull spirit's prism)  
Originally had one color —  
Sending me on a pilgrimage  
Through ancient and through modern times  
To many peoples, various climes,  
Where I may see Saint, Savage, Sage  
Fuse their respective creeds in one  
Before the general Father's throne !

## xx.

— 'T was the horrible storm began afresh !  
The black night caught me in his mesh  
Whirled me up, and flung me prone.  
I was left on the college-step alone.  
I looked, and far there, ever fleeting  
Far, far away, the receding gesture,  
And looming of the lessening vesture ! —  
Swept forward from my stupid hand,  
While I watched my foolish heart expand  
In the lazy glow of benevolence,  
O'er the various modes of man's belief.  
I sprang up with fear's vehemence.  
— Needs must there be one way, our chief  
Best way of worship : let me strive

To find it, and when found, contrive  
My fellows also take their share !  
This constitutes my earthly care :  
God's is above it and distinct. . .  
For I, a man, with men am linked,  
And not a brute with brutes ; no gain  
That I experience, must remain  
Unshared : but should my best endeavor  
To share it, fail — subsisteth ever  
God's care above, and I exult  
That God, by God's own ways occult,  
May — doth, I will believe — bring back  
All wanderers to a single track. . .  
Meantime, I can but testify  
God's care for me — no more, can I —  
It is but for myself I *know* ;  
The world rolls witnessing around me  
Only to leave me as it found me ;  
Men cry there, but my ear is slow :  
Their races flourish or decay  
— What boots it, while yon lucid way  
Loaded with stars, divides the vault ?  
But soon my soul repairs its fault  
When, sharpening sense's hebetude,  
She turns on my own life ! So viewed,  
No mere mote's-breadth but teems immense  
With witnessings of Providence :  
And woe to me if when I look  
Upon that record, the sole book

Unsealed to me, I take no heed  
Of any warning that I read !  
Have I been sure, this Christmas-Eve,  
God's own hand did the rainbow weave,  
Whereby the truth from heaven slid  
Into my soul ? — I cannot bid  
The world admit He stooped to heal  
My soul, as if in a thunder-peal  
Where one heard noise, and one saw flame,  
I only knew He named my name :  
But what is the world to me, for sorrow  
Or joy in its censure, when to-morrow  
It drops the remark, with just-turned head  
Then, on again — that man is dead ?  
Yes, but for me — my name called, — drawn  
As a conscript's lot from the lap's black yawn,  
He has dipt into on a battle-dawn :  
Bid out of life by a nod, a glance, —  
Stumbling, mute-mazed, at nature's chance, —  
With a rapid finger circled round,  
Fixed to the first poor inch of ground  
To fight from, where his foot was found ;  
Whose ear but a minute since lay free  
To the wide camp's buzz and gossipry —  
Summoned, a solitary man,  
To end his life where his life began,  
From the safe glad rear, to the dreadful van !  
Soul of mine, hadst thou caught and held  
By the hem of the yesture ! —

## XXI.

And I caught  
At the flying robe, and unrepelled  
Was lapped again in its folds full-fraught  
With warmth and wonder and delight,  
God's mercy being infinite.  
For scarce had the words escaped my tongue,  
When, at a passionate bound, I sprung  
Out of the wandering world of rain,  
Into the little chapel again.

## XXII.

How else was I found there, bolt upright  
On my bench, as if I had never left it?  
— Never flung out on the common at night  
Nor met the storm and wedge-like cleft it,  
Seen the raree-show of Peter's successor,  
Or the laboratory of the Professor!  
For the Vision, *that* was true, I wist,  
True as that heaven and earth exist.  
There sat my friend, the yellow and tall,  
With his neck and its wen in the selfsame place;  
Yet my nearest neighbor's cheek showed gall,  
She had slid away a contemptuous space:  
And the old fat woman, late so placable,  
Eyed me with symptoms, hardly mistakable,  
Of her milk of kindness turning rancid.  
In short a spectator might have fancied

That I had nodded betrayed by slumber,  
Yet kept my seat, a warning ghastly,  
Through the heads of the sermon, nine in number,  
And woke up now at the tenth and lastly.  
But again, could such a disgrace have happened ?  
Each friend at my elbow had surely nudged it ;  
And, as for the sermon, where did my nap end ?  
Unless I heard it, could I have judged it ?  
Could I report as I do at the close,  
First, the preacher speaks through his nose :  
Second, his gesture is too emphatic :  
Thirdly, to wave what 's pedagogic,  
The subject-matter itself lacks logic :  
Fourthly, the English is ungrammatical.  
Great news ! the preacher is found no Pascal,  
Whom, if I pleased, I might to the task call  
Of making square to a finite eye  
The circle of infinity,  
And find so all-but-just-succeeding !  
Great news ! the sermon proves no reading  
Where bee-like in the flowers I may bury me,  
Like Taylor's, the immortal Jeremy !  
And now that I know the very worst of him,  
What was it I thought to obtain at first of him ?  
Ha ! Is God mocked, as He asks ?  
Shall I take on me to change His tasks,  
And dare, despatched to a river-head  
For a simple draught of the element,  
Neglect the thing for which He sent,

And return with another thing instead? —  
Saying, “ Because the water found  
Welling up from underground,  
Is mingled with the taints of earth,  
While Thou, I know, dost laugh at dearth,  
And couldest, at a word, convulse  
The world with the leap of its river-pulse, —  
Therefore I turned from the oozings muddy,  
And bring thee a chalice I found, instead :  
See the brave veins in the breccia ruddy !  
One would suppose that the marble bled.  
What matters the water? A hope I have nursed,  
That the waterless cup will quench my thirst.”

— Better have knelt at the poorest stream  
That trickles in pain from the straitest rift !  
For the less or the more is all God’s gift,  
Who blocks up or breaks wide the granite-seam.  
And here, is there water or not, to drink ?

I, then, in ignorance and weakness,  
Taking God’s help, have attained to think  
My heart does best to receive in meekness  
That mode of worship, as most to His mind,  
Where earthly aids being cast behind,  
His All in All appears serene  
With the thinnest human veil between,  
Letting the mystic Lamps, the Seven,  
The many motions of His spirit,  
Pass, as they list, to earth from Heaven.  
For the preacher’s merit or demerit,

It were to be wished the flaws were fewer  
In the earthen vessel, holding treasure,  
Which lies as safe in a golden ewer ;  
But the main thing is, does it hold good measure ?—  
Heaven soon sets right all other matters !—  
Ask, else, these ruins of humanity,  
This flesh worn out to rags and tatters,  
This soul at struggle with insanity,  
Who thence take comfort, can I doubt,  
Which an empire gained, were a loss without.  
May it be mine ! And let us hope  
That no worse blessing befall the Pope,  
Turn'd sick at last of the day's buffoonery,  
Of its posturings and its petticoatings,  
Beside his Bourbon bully's gloatings  
In the bloody orgies of drunk poltroonery !  
Nor may the Professor forego its peace  
At Göttingen, presently, when, in the dusk  
Of his life, if his cough, as I fear, should increase  
Prophesied of by that horrible husk ;  
When, thicker and thicker, the darkness fills  
The world through his misty spectacles,  
And he gropes for something more substantial  
Than a fable, myth, or personification,—  
May Christ do for him, what no mere man shall,  
And stand confessed as the God of salvation !  
Meantime, in the still recurring fear  
Lest myself, at unawares, be found,  
While attacking the choice of my neighbors round,

Without my own made — I choose here !  
The giving out of the hymn reclaims me ;  
I have done ! — And if any blames me,  
Thinking that merely to touch in brevity  
The topics I dwell on, were unlawful, —  
Or, worse, that I trench, with undue levity,  
On the bounds of the holy and the awful, —  
I praise the heart, and pity the head of him,  
And refer myself to THEE, instead of him,  
Who head and heart alike discernest,  
Looking below light speech we utter  
When the frothy spume and frequent sputter  
Prove that the soul's depths boil in earnest !  
May the truth shine out, stand ever before us !  
I put up pencil and join chorus  
To Hepzibah Tune, without further apology,  
The last five verses of the third section  
Of the seventeenth hymn in Whitfield's Collection,  
To conclude with the doxology.

## E A S T E R - D A Y .

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### I.

How very hard it is to be  
A Christian ! Hard for you and me,  
— Not the mere task of making real  
That duty up to its ideal,  
Effecting thus, complete and whole,  
A purpose of the human soul —  
For that is always hard to do ;  
But hard, I mean, for me and you  
To realize it, more or less,  
With even the moderate success  
Which commonly repays our strife  
To carry out the aims of life.  
“ This aim is greater,” you will say,  
“ And so more arduous every way.”  
— But the importance of their fruits  
Still proves to man, in all pursuits,  
Proportional encouragement.  
“ Then, what if it be God’s intent  
That labor to this one result  
Should seem unduly difficult ? ”  
Ah, that’s a question in the dark —

And the sole thing that I remark  
Upon the difficulty, this ;  
We do not see it where it *is*,  
At the beginning of the race :  
As we proceed, it shifts its place,  
And where we looked for crowns to fall,  
We find the tug 's to come, — that 's all.

## II.

At first you say, “ The whole, or chief  
Of difficulties, is Belief.  
Could I believe once thoroughly,  
The rest were simple. What ? Am I  
An idiot, do you think, — a beast ?  
Prove to me, only that the least  
Command of God is God's indeed,  
And what injunction shall I need  
To pay obedience ? Death so nigh,  
When time must end, eternity  
Begin, — and cannot I compute,  
Weigh loss and gain together, suit  
My actions to the balance drawn,  
And give my body to be sawn  
Asunder, hacked in pieces, tied  
To horses, stoned, burned, crucified,  
Like any martyr of the list ?  
How gladly ! — if I made acquist,  
Through the brief minute's fierce annoy,  
Of God's eternity of joy.”

## III.

— And certainly you name the point  
Wheron all turns : for could you joint  
This flexile finite life once tight  
Into the fixed and infinite,  
You, safe inside, would spurn what 's out,  
With carelessness enough, no doubt —  
Would spurn mere life : but when time brings  
To their next stage your reasonings,  
Your eyes, late wide, begin to wink  
Nor see the path so well, I think.

## IV.

You say, “ Faith may be, one agrees,  
A touchstone for God's purposes,  
Even as ourselves conceive of them.  
Could He acquit us or condemn  
For holding what no hand can loose,  
Rejecting when we can't but choose ?  
As well award the victor's wreath  
To whosoever should take breath  
Duly each minute while he lived —  
Grant Heaven, because a man contrived  
To see its sunlight every day  
He walked forth on the public way.  
You must mix some uncertainty  
With faith, if you would have faith *be*.  
Why, what but faith, do we abhor

And idolize each other for —  
Faith in our evil, or our good,  
Which is or is not understood  
Aright by those we love or those  
We hate, thence called our friends or foes ?  
Your mistress saw your spirit's grace,  
When, turning from the ugly face,  
I found belief in it too hard ;  
And she and I have our reward.

— Yet here a doubt peeps : well for us  
Weak beings, to go using thus  
A touchstone for our little ends,  
Trying with faith the foes and friends ;  
— But God, bethink you ! I would fain  
Conceive of the Creator's reign  
As based upon exacter laws  
Than creatures build by with applause.  
In all God's acts — (as Plato cries  
He doth) — He *should* geometrize.  
Whence, I desiderate . . . ”

## v.

I see !

You would grow as a natural tree,  
Stand as a rock, soar up like fire.  
The world 's so perfect and entire,  
Quite above faith, so right and fit !  
Go there, walk up and down in it !  
No. The creation travails, groans —

Contrive your music from its moans,  
Without or let or hindrance, friend !  
That 's an old story, and its end  
As old — you come back (be sincere)  
With every question you put here  
(Here where there once was, and is still,  
We think, a living oracle,  
Whose answers you stand carping at)  
This time flung back unanswered flat, —  
Besides, perhaps, as many more  
As those that drove you out before,  
Now added, where was little need !  
Questions impossible, indeed,  
To us who sat still, all and each  
Persuaded that our earth had speech  
Of God's, writ down, no matter if  
In cursive type or hieroglyph, —  
Which one fact freed us from the yoke  
Of guessing why He never spoke.  
You come back in no better plight  
Than when you left us, — am I right ?

## VI.

So, the old process, I conclude,  
Goes on, the reasoning 's pursued  
Further. You own, " 'T is well averred,  
A scientific faith 's absurd,  
— Frustrates the very end 't was meant  
To serve. So, I would rest content

With a mere probability,  
But, probable ; the chance must lie  
Clear on one side,— lie all in rough,  
So long as there be just enough  
To pin my faith to, though it hap  
Only at points : from gap to gap  
One hangs up a huge curtain so,  
Grandly, nor seeks to have it go  
Foldless and flat along the wall.

— What care I if some interval  
Of life less plainly may depend  
On God ? I'd hang there to the end ;  
And thus I should not find it hard  
To be a Christian and debarred  
From trailing on the earth, till furled  
Away by death. — Renounce the world !  
Were that a mighty hardship ? Plan  
A pleasant life, and straight some man  
Beside you, with, if he thought fit,  
Abundant means to compass it,  
Shall turn deliberate aside  
To try and live as, if you tried  
You clearly might, yet most despise.  
One friend of mine wears out his eyes,  
Slighting the stupid joys of sense,  
In patient hope that, ten years hence,  
' Somewhat completer,' he may say,  
' My list of *coleoptera* ! '

While just the other who most laughs

At him, above all epitaphs  
Aspires to have his tomb describe  
Himself as Sole among the tribe  
Of snuff-box-fanciers, who possessed  
A Grignon with the Regent's crest.  
So that, subduing, as you want,  
Whatever stands predominant  
Among my earthly appetites  
For tastes, and smells, and sounds, and sights,  
I shall be doing that alone,  
To gain a palm-branch and a throne,  
Which fifty people undertake  
To do, and gladly, for the sake  
Of giving a Semitic guess,  
Or playing pawns at blindfold chess."

## VII.

Good ! and the next thing is,— look round  
For evidence enough. 'T is found,  
No doubt: as is your sort of mind,  
So is your sort of search — you 'll find  
What you desire, and that 's to be  
A Christian. What says history ?  
How comforting a point it were  
To find some mummy-scrap declare  
There lived a Moses ! Better still,  
Prove Jonah's whale translatable  
Into some quicksand of the seas,  
Isle, cavern, rock, or what you please,

That faith might clap her wings and crow  
From such an eminence ! Or, no —  
The human heart 's best ; you prefer  
Making that prove the minister  
To truth ; you probe its wants and needs,  
And hopes and fears, then try what creeds  
Meet these most aptly, — resolute  
That faith plucks such substantial fruit  
Wherever these two correspond,  
She little needs to look beyond,  
And puzzle out who Orpheus was,  
Or Dionysius Zagrias.  
You 'll find sufficient, as I say,  
To satisfy you either way ;  
You wanted to believe ; your pains  
Are crowned — you do : and what remains ?  
“ Renounce the world ! ” — Ah, were it done  
By merely cutting one by one  
Your limbs off, with your wise head last,  
How easy were it ! — how soon past,  
If once in the believing mood !  
“ Such is man's usual gratitude,  
Such thanks to God do we return,  
For not exacting that we spurn  
A single gift of life, forego  
One real gain, — only taste them so  
With gravity and temperance,  
That those mild virtues may enhance  
Such pleasures, rather than abstract —

Last spice of which, will be the fact  
Of love discerned in every gift ;  
While, when the scene of life shall shift,  
And the gay heart be taught to ache,  
As sorrows and privations take  
The place of joy, — the thing that seems  
Mere misery, under human schemes,  
Becomes, regarded by the light  
Of love, as very near, or quite  
As good a gift as joy before.  
So plain is it that, all the more  
God's dispensation's merciful,  
More pettishly we try and cull  
Briers, thistles, from our private plot,  
To mar God's ground where thorns are not ! ”

## VIII.

Do you say this, or I ? — Oh, you !  
Then, what, my friend, — (thus I pursue  
Our parley) — you indeed opine  
That the Eternal and Divine  
Did, eighteen centuries ago,  
In very truth . . . Enough ! you know  
The all-stupendous tale, — that Birth,  
That Life, that Death ! And all, the earth  
Shuddered at, — all, the heavens grew black  
Rather than see ; all, Nature's rack  
And throe at dissolution's brink  
Attested, — all took place, you think,

Only to give our joys a zest,  
And prove our sorrows for the best?  
We differ, then! Were I, still pale  
And heartstruck at the dreadful tale,  
Waiting to hear God's voice declare  
What horror followed for my share,  
As implicated in the deed,  
Apart from other sins,— concede  
That if He blacked out in a blot  
My brief life's pleasantness, 't were not  
So very disproportionate!  
Or there might be another fate—  
I certainly could understand  
(If fancies were the thing in hand)  
How God might save, at that Day's price,  
The impure in their impurities,  
Give formal license and complete  
To choose the fair and pick the sweet.  
But there be certain words, broad, plain,  
Uttered again and yet again,  
Hard to mistake, or overgloss—  
Announcing this world's gain for loss,  
And bidding us reject the same:  
The whole world lieth (they proclaim)  
In wickedness,— come out of it!  
Turn a deaf ear, if you think fit,  
But I who thrill through every nerve  
At thought of what deaf ears deserve,—  
How do you counsel in the case?

## IX.

“ I’d take, by all means, in your place,  
The safe side, since it so appears :  
Deny myself, a few brief years,  
The natural pleasure, leave the fruit  
Or cut the plant up by the root.  
Remember what a martyr said  
On the rude tablet overhead !  
‘ I was born sickly, poor and mean,  
A slave : no misery could screen  
The holders of the pearl of price  
From Cæsar’s envy ; therefore twice  
I fought with beasts, and three times saw  
My children suffer by his law ;  
At last my own release was earned :  
I was some time in being burned,  
But at the close a Hand came through  
The fire above my head, and drew  
My soul to Christ, whom now I see.  
Sergius, a brother, writes for me  
This testimony on the wall —  
For me, I have forgot it all.’  
You say right ; this were not so hard !  
And since one nowise is debarred  
From this, why not escape some sins  
By such a method ? ”

## x.

Then begins  
To the old point, revulsion new —  
(For 't is just this, I bring you to)  
If after all we should mistake,  
And so renounce life for the sake  
Of death and nothing else ? You hear  
Our friends we jeered at, send the jeer  
Back to ourselves with good effect —  
“ There *were* my beetles to collect ! ”  
“ My box — a trifle, I confess,  
But here I hold it, ne'ertheless ! ”  
Poor idiots, (let us pluck up heart  
And answer) we, the better part  
Have chosen, though 't were only hope, —  
Nor envy moles like you that grope  
Amid your veritable muck,  
More than the grasshoppers would truck,  
For yours, their passionate life away,  
That spends itself in leaps all day  
To reach the sun, you want the eyes  
To see, as they the wings to rise  
And match the noble hearts of them !  
Thus the contemner we contemn, —  
And, when doubt strikes us, thus we ward  
Its stroke off, caught upon our guard,  
— Not struck enough to overturn  
Our faith, but shake it — make us learn

What I began with, and, I wis,  
End, having proved, — how hard it is  
To be a Christian !

## XI.

“ Proved, or not,  
Howe'er you wis, small thanks, I wot,  
You get of mine, for taking pains  
To make it hard to me. Who gains  
By that, I wonder ? Here I live  
In trusting ease ; and here you drive  
At causing me to lose what most  
Yourself would mourn for had you lost ! ”

## XII.

But, do you see, my friend, that thus  
You leave St. Paul for *Æschylus* ?  
— Who made his Titan’s arch-device  
The giving men *blind hopes* to spice  
The meal of life with, else devoured  
In bitter haste, while lo ! death loured  
Before them at the platter’s edge !  
If faith should be, as I allege,  
Quite other than a condiment  
To heighten flavors with, or meant  
(Like that brave curry of his Grace)  
To take at need the victuals’ place ?  
If, having dined, you would digest  
Besides, and turning to your rest  
Should find instead . . .

## XIII.

Now, you shall see  
And judge if a mere foppery  
Pricks on my speaking ! I resolve  
To utter . . . yes, it shall devolve  
On you to hear as solemn, strange  
And dread a thing as in the range  
Of facts, — or fancies, if God will —  
E'er happened to our kind ! I still  
Stand in the cloud, and while it wraps  
My face, ought not to speak, perhaps ;  
Seeing that if I carry through  
My purpose, if my words in you  
Find a live actual listener,  
My story, reason must aver  
False after all — the happy chance !  
While, if each human countenance  
I meet in London day by day,  
Be what I fear, — my warnings fray  
No one, and no one they convert,  
And no one helps me to assert  
How hard it is to really be  
A Christian, and in vacancy  
I pour this story !

## XIV. —

I commence  
By trying to inform you, whence

It comes that every Easter-night  
As now, I sit up, watch, till light,  
Upon those chimney-stacks and roofs,  
Give, through my window-pane, gray proofs  
That Easter-day is breaking slow.

On such a night, three years ago,  
It chanced that I had cause to cross  
The common, where the chapel was,  
Our friend spoke of, the other day —  
You 've not forgotten, I dare say.

I fell to musing of the time  
So close, the blessed matin-prime  
All hearts leap up at, in some guise —  
One could not well do otherwise.

Insensibly my thoughts were bent  
Toward the main point ; I overwent  
Much the same ground of reasoning  
As you and I just now. One thing  
Remained, however — one that tasked  
My soul to answer ; and I asked,  
Fairly and frankly, what might be  
That History, that Faith, to me  
— Me there — not me in some domain  
Built up and peopled by my brain,  
Weighing its merits as one weighs  
Mere theories for blame or praise,  
— The kingcraft of the Lucumons,  
Or Fourier's scheme, its pros and cons, —  
But *my* faith *there*, or none at all.

“ How were my case, now, did I fall  
Dead here, this minute — should I lie  
Faithful or faithless ? ” — Note that I  
Inclined thus ever ! — little prone  
For instance, when I lay alone  
In childhood, to go calm to sleep  
And leave a closet where might keep  
His watch perdue some murderer  
Waiting till twelve o’clock to stir,  
As good, authentic legends tell :  
“ He might : but how improbable !  
How little likely to deserve  
The pains and trial to the nerve  
Of thrusting head into the dark ! ” —  
Urged my old nurse, and bade me mark  
Beside, that, should the dreadful scout  
Really lie hid there, and leap out  
At first turn of the rusty key,  
Mine were small gain that she could see,  
Killed not in bed but on the floor,  
And losing one night’s sleep the more.  
I tell you, I would always burst  
The door ope, know my fate at first.  
This time, indeed, the closet penned  
No such assassin : but a friend  
Rather, peeped out to guard me, fit  
For counsel, Common Sense, to wit,  
Who said a good deal that might pass, —  
Heartening, impartial too, it was,

Judge else : " For, soberly now, — who  
Should be a Christian if not you ? " —  
(Hear how he smoothed me down). " One takes  
A whole life, sees what course it makes  
Mainly, and not by fits and starts —  
In spite of stoppage which imparts  
Fresh value to the general speed.  
A life, with none, would fly indeed :  
Your progressing is slower — right !  
We deal with progress and not flight.  
Through baffling senses passionate,  
Fancies as restless, — with a freight  
Of knowledge cumbersome enough  
To sink your ship when waves grow rough,  
Though meant for ballast in the hold, —  
I find, 'mid dangers manifold,  
The good bark answers to the helm  
Where faith sits, easier to o'erwhelm  
Than some stout peasant's heavenly guide,  
Whose hard head could not, if it tried,  
Conceive a doubt, nor understand  
How senses hornier than his hand  
Should 'tice the Christian off his guard.  
More happy ! But shall we award  
Less honor to the hull which, dogged  
By storms, a mere wreck, waterlogged,  
Masts by the board, her bulwarks gone,  
And stanchions going, yet bears on, —  
Than to mere life-boats, built to save,

And triumph o'er the breaking wave ?  
Make perfect your good ship as these,  
And what were her performances ! ”  
I added — “ Would the ship reach home !  
I wish indeed ‘ God’s kingdom come — ’  
The day when I shall see appear  
His bidding, as my duty, clear  
From doubt ! And it shall dawn, that day,  
Some future season ; Easter may  
Prove, not impossibly, the time —  
Yes, that were striking — fates would chime  
So aptly ! Easter-morn, to bring  
The Judgment ! — deeper in the Spring  
Than now, however, when there’s snow  
Capping the hills ; for earth must show  
All signs of meaning to pursue  
Her tasks as she was wont to do  
— The skylark, taken by surprise  
As we ourselves, shall recognize  
Sudden the end. For suddenly  
It comes ; the dreadfulness must be  
In that ; all warrants the belief —  
‘ At night it cometh like a thief.’  
I fancy why the trumpet blows ;  
— Plainly, to wake one. From repose  
We shall start up, at last awake  
From life, that insane dream we take  
For waking now, because it seems.  
And as, when now we wake from dreams,

We laugh, while we recall them, ' Fool,  
To let the chance slip, linger cool  
When such adventure offered ! Just  
A bridge to cross, a dwarf to thrust  
Aside, a wicked mage to stab —  
And, lo ye, I had kissed Queen Mab ! ' —  
So shall we marvel why we grudged  
Our labor here, and idly judged  
Of Heaven, we might have gained, but lose !  
Lose ? Talk of loss, and I refuse  
To plead at all ! You speak no worse  
Nor better than my ancient nurse  
When she would tell me in my youth  
I well deserved that shapes uncouth  
Frighted and teased me in my sleep —  
Why could I not in memory keep  
Her precept for the evil's cure ?  
' Pinch your own arm, boy, and be sure  
You 'll wake forthwith ! ' ”

## xv.

And as I said

This nonsense, throwing back my head  
With light complacent laugh, I found  
Suddenly all the midnight round  
One fire. The dome of heaven had stood  
As made up of a multitude  
Of handbreadth cloudlets, one vast rack  
Of ripples infinite and black,

From sky to sky. Sudden there went,  
Like horror and astonishment,  
A fierce vindictive scribble of red  
Quick flame across, as if one said  
(The angry scribe of Judgment) "There —  
Burn it!" And straight I was aware  
That the whole ribwork round, minute  
Cloud touching cloud beyond compute,  
Was tinted, each with its own spot  
Of burning at the core, till clot  
Jammed against clot, and spilt its fire  
Over all heaven, which 'gan suspire  
As fanned to measure equable, —  
As when great conflagrations kill  
Night overhead, and rise and sink,  
Reflected. Now the fire would shrink  
And wither off the blasted face  
Of heaven, and I distinct might trace  
The sharp black ridgy outlines left  
Unburned like network — then, each cleft  
The fire had been sucked back into,  
Regorged, and out it surging flew  
Furiously, and night writhed inflamed,  
Till, tolerating to be tamed  
No longer, certain rays world-wide  
Shot downwardly. On every side  
Caught past escape, the earth was lit ;  
As if a dragon's nostril split  
And all his famished ire o'erflowed ;

Then, as he winced at his lord's goad,  
Back he inhaled : whereat I found  
The clouds into vast pillars bound,  
Based on the corners of the earth,  
Propping the skies at top : a dearth  
Of fire i' the violet intervals,  
Leaving exposed the utmost walls  
Of time, about to tumble in  
And end the world.

## xvi.

I felt begin  
The Judgment-Day : to retrocede  
Was too late now. “ In very deed,”  
(I uttered to myself) “ that Day ! ”  
The intuition burned away  
All darkness from my spirit too :  
There, stood I, found and fixed, I knew,  
*Choosing the world.* The choice was made ;  
And naked and disguiseless stayed,  
And unevadable, the fact.  
My brain held ne'ertheless compact  
Its senses, nor my heart declined  
Its office ; rather, both combined  
To help me in this juncture. I  
Lost not a second, — agony  
Gave boldness : since my life had end  
And my choice with it — best defend,  
Applaud both ! I resolved to say,

“ So was I framed by Thee, such way  
I put to use Thy senses here !  
It was so beautiful, so near,  
Thy world,— what could I then but choose  
My part there ? Nor did I refuse  
To look above the transient boon  
Of time ; but it was hard so soon  
As in a short life, to give up  
Such beauty : I could put the cup  
Undrained of half its fulness, by ;  
But, to renounce it utterly,  
— That was too hard ! Nor did the cry  
Which bade renounce it, touch my brain  
Authentically deep and plain  
Enough to make my lips let go.  
But Thou, who knowest all, dost know  
Whether I was not, life’s brief while,  
Endeavoring to reconcile  
Those lips (too tardily, alas !)  
To letting the dear remnant pass,  
One day,— some drops of earthly good  
Untasted ! Is it for this mood,  
That Thou, whose earth delights so well,  
Hast made its complement a hell ? ”

## xvii.

A final belch of fire like blood,  
Overbroke all heaven in one flood  
Of doom. Then fire was sky, and sky

Fire, and both, one brief ecstasy,  
Then ashes. But I heard no noise  
(Whatever was) because a Voice  
Beside me spoke thus, “Life is done,  
Time ends, Eternity’s begun,  
And thou art judged for evermore.”

## XVIII.

I looked up ; all seemed as before ;  
Of that cloud-Tophet overhead,  
No trace was left : I saw instead  
The common round me, and the sky  
Above, stretched drear and emptily  
Of life. ’T was the last watch of night  
Except what brings the morning quite ;  
When the armed angel, conscience-clear,  
His task nigh done, leans o’er his spear  
And gazes on the earth he guards,  
Safe one night more through all its wards,  
Till God relieve him at his post.  
“A dream — a waking dream at most !”  
(I spoke out quick, that I might shake  
The horrid nightmare off, and wake.)  
“The world gone, yet the world is here ?  
Are not all things as they appear ?  
Is Judgment past for me alone ?  
— And where had place the great white throne ?  
The rising of the quick and dead ?  
Where stood they, small and great ? Who read

The sentence from the opened book?"  
So, by degrees, the blood forsook  
My heart, and let it beat afresh;  
I knew I should break through the mesh  
Of horror, and breathe presently:  
When, lo, again, the Voice by me!

## XIX.

I saw . . . Oh, brother, 'mid far sands  
The palm-tree-cinctured city stands,  
Bright-white beneath, as heaven, bright-blue,  
Leans o'er it, while the years pursue  
Their course, unable to abate  
Its paradisal laugh at fate!  
One morn, — the Arab staggers blind  
O'er a new tract of death, calcined  
To ashes, silence, nothingness, —  
And strives, with dizzy wits, to guess  
Whence fell the blow. What if, 'twixt skies  
And prostrate earth, he should surprise  
The imaged vapor, head to foot,  
Surveying, motionless and mute,  
Its work, ere, in a whirlwind rapt,  
It vanish up again? — So hapt  
My chance. HE stood there. Like the smoke  
Pillared o'er Sodom, when day broke, —  
I saw Him. One magnific pall  
Mantled in massive fold and fall  
His dread, and coiled in snaky swathes

About His feet: night's black, that bathes  
All else, broke, grizzled with despair,  
Against the soul of blackness there.  
A gesture told the mood within —  
That wrapped right hand which based the chin,  
That intense meditation fixed  
On His procedure, — pity mixed  
With the fulfilment of decree.  
Motionless, thus, He spoke to me,  
Who fell before His feet, a mass,  
No man now.

## XX.

“ All is come to pass.

Such shows are over for each soul  
They had respect to. In the roll  
Of Judgment which convinced mankind  
Of sin, stood many, bold and blind,  
Terror must burn the truth into :  
Their fate for them ! — thou hadst to do  
With absolute omnipotence,  
Able its judgments to dispense  
To the whole race, as every one  
Were its sole object. Judgment done,  
God is, thou art, — the rest is hurled  
To nothingness for thee. This world,  
This finite life, thou hast preferred,  
In disbelief of God's own word,  
To Heaven and to Infinity.

Here the probation was for thee,  
To show thy soul the earthly mixed  
With heavenly, it must choose betwixt.  
The earthly joys lay palpable, —  
A taint, in each, distinct as well ;  
The heavenly flitted, faint and rare,  
Above them, but as truly were  
Taintless, so, in their nature, best.  
Thy choice was earth : thou didst attest  
'T was fitter spirit should subserve  
The flesh, than flesh refine to nerve  
Beneath the spirit's play. Advance  
No claim to their inheritance  
Who chose the spirit's fugitive  
Brief gleams, and yearned, ' This were to live  
Indeed, if rays, completely pure  
From flesh that dulls them, could endure, —  
Not shoot in meteor-light athwart  
Our earth, to show how cold and swart  
It lies beneath their fire, but stand  
As stars do, destined to expand,  
Prove veritable worlds, our home !'  
Thou saidst, — ' Let spirit star the dome  
Of sky, that flesh may miss no peak,  
No nook of earth, — I shall not seek  
Its service further ! ' Thou art shut  
Out of the heaven of spirit ; glut  
Thy sense upon the world : 't is thine  
Forever — take it ! "

## XXI.

“ How ? Is mine,  
The world ? ” (I cried, while my soul broke  
Out in a transport,) “ Hast thou spoke  
Plainly in that ? Earth’s exquisite  
Treasures of wonder and delight,  
For me ! ”

## XXII.

The austere Voice returned,—  
“ So soon made happy ? Hadst thou learned  
What God accounteth happiness,  
Thou wouldest not find it hard to guess  
What hell may be His punishment  
For those who doubt if God invent  
Better than they. Let such men rest  
Content with what they judged the best.  
Let the unjust usurp at will :  
The filthy shall be filthy still :  
Miser, there waits the gold for thee ! .  
Hater, indulge thine enmity !  
And thou, whose heaven self-ordained  
Was, to enjoy earth unrestrained,  
Do it ! Take all the ancient show !  
The woods shall wave, the rivers flow,  
And men apparently pursue  
Their works, as they were wont to do,  
While living in probation yet.

I promise not thou shalt forget  
 The Past, now gone to its account ;  
 But leave thee with the old amount  
 Of faculties, nor less nor more,  
 Unvisited, as heretofore,  
 By God's free spirit, that makes an end.  
 So, once more, take thy world ! expend  
 Eternity upon its shows, —  
 Flung thee as freely as one rose  
 Out of a summer's opulence,  
 Over the Eden-barrier whence  
 Thou art excluded. Knock in vain ! ”

## XXIII.

I sat up. All was still again.  
 I breathed free : to my heart, back fled  
 The warmth. “ But, all the world ! ” (I said)  
 I stooped and picked a leaf of fern,  
 And recollect I might learn  
 From books, how many myriad sorts  
 Of fern exist, to trust reports,  
 Each as distinct and beautiful  
 As this, the very first I cull.  
 Think, from the first leaf to the last !  
 Conceive, then, earth's resources ! Vast  
 Exhaustless beauty, endless change  
 Of wonder ! and this foot shall range  
 Alps, Andes, — and this eye devour  
 The bee-bird and the aloe-flower ?

## XXIV.

Then the Voice, “ Welcome so to rate  
The arras-folds that variegate  
The earth, God’s antechamber, well !  
The wise, who waited there, could tell  
By these, what royalties in store  
Lay one step past the entrance-door.  
For whom, was reckoned, not too much,  
This life’s munificence ? For such  
As thou, — a race, whereof scarce one  
Was able, in a million,  
To feel that any marvel lay  
In objects round his feet all day ;  
Scarce one, in many millions more,  
Willing, if able, to explore  
The secreter, minuter charm !  
— Brave souls, a fern-leaf could disarm  
Of power to cope with God’s intent, —  
Or scared if the south firmament  
With north-fire did its wings refledge !  
All partial beauty was a pledge  
Of beauty in its plenitude :  
But since the pledge sufficed thy mood,  
Retain it ! plenitude be theirs  
Who looked above !”

## XXV.

Though sharp despairs  
Shot through me, I held up, bore on.

“ What matter though my trust were gone  
From natural things? Henceforth my part  
Be less with Nature than with Art!  
For Art supplants, gives mainly worth  
To Nature; 't is Man stamps the earth —  
And I will seek his impress, seek  
The statuary of the Greek,  
Italy's painting — there my choice  
Shall fix ! ”

## XXVI.

“ Obtain it! ” said the Voice.  
“ — The one form with its single act,  
Which sculptors labored to abstract,  
The one face, painters tried to draw,  
With its one look, from throngs they saw.  
And that perfection in their soul,  
These only hinted at? The whole,  
They were but parts of? What each laid  
His claim to glory on? — afraid  
His fellow-men should give him rank  
By the poor tentatives he shrank  
Smitten at heart from, all the more,  
That gazers pressed in to adore!  
‘ Shall I be judged by only these? ’  
If such his soul's capacities,  
Even while he trod the earth, — think, now  
What pomp in Buonarroti's brow,  
With its new palace-brain where dwells

Superb the soul, unvexed by cells  
That crumbled with the transient clay !  
What visions will his right hand's sway  
Still turn to form, as still they burst  
Upon him ? How will he quench thirst,  
Titanically infantine,  
Laid at the breast of the Divine ?  
Does it confound thee, — this first page  
Emblazoning man's heritage ? —  
Can this alone absorb thy sight,  
As pages were not infinite, —  
Like the omnipotence which tasks  
Itself, to furnish all that asks  
The soul it means to satiate ?  
What was the world, the starry state  
Of the broad skies, — what, all displays  
Of power and beauty intermixed,  
Which now thy soul is chained betwixt, —  
What else than needful furniture  
For life's first stage ? God's work, be sure,  
No more spreads wasted, than falls scant :  
He filled, did not exceed, Man's want  
Of beauty in this life. But through  
Life pierce, — and what has earth to do,  
Its utmost beauty's appanage,  
With the requirement of next stage ?  
Did God pronounce earth ' very good ' ?  
Needs must it be, while understood  
For man's preparatory state ;

Nothing to heighten nor abate :  
Transfer the same completeness here,  
To serve a new state's use, — and drear  
Deficiency gapes every side !  
The good, tried once, were bad, retried.  
See the enwrapping rocky niche,  
Sufficient for the sleep, in which  
The lizard breathes for ages safe :  
Split the mould — and as this would chafe  
The creature's new world-widened sense,  
One minute after day dispense  
The thousand sounds and sights that broke  
In, on him, at the chisel's stroke, —  
So, in God's eye, the earth's first stuff  
Was, neither more nor less, enough  
To house man's soul, man's need fulfil.  
Man reckoned it immeasurable ?  
So thinks the lizard of his vault !  
Could God be taken in default,  
Short of contrivances, by you, —  
Or reached, ere ready to pursue  
His progress through eternity ?  
That chambered rock, the lizard's world,  
Your easy mallet's blow has hurled  
To nothingness forever ; so,  
Has God abolished at a blow  
This world, wherein his saints were pent, —  
Who, though found grateful and content,  
With the provision there, as thou,

Yet knew He would not disallow  
Their spirit's hunger, felt as well,—  
Unsated,— not unsatiable,  
As Paradise gives proof. Deride  
Their choice now, thou who sit'st outside ! ”

## xxvii.

I cried in anguish, “ Mind, the mind,  
So miserably cast behind,  
To gain what had been wisely lost !  
O, let me strive to make the most  
Of the poor stinted soul, I nipped  
Of budding wings, else now equipt  
For voyage from summer isle to isle !  
And though she needs must reconcile  
Ambition to the life on ground,  
Still, I can profit by late found  
But precious knowledge. Mind is best—  
I will seize mind, forego the rest,  
And try how far my tethered strength  
May crawl in this poor breadth and length.  
Let me, since I can fly no more,  
At least spin dervish-like about  
(Till giddy rapture almost doubt  
I fly) through circling sciences,  
Philosophies and histories !  
Should the whirl slacken there, then verse,  
Fining to music, shall asperse  
Fresh and fresh fire-dew, till I strain

Intoxicate, half-break my chain !  
Not joyless, though more favored feet  
Stand calm, where I want wings to beat  
The floor. At least earth's bond is broke !”

## XXVIII.

Then, (sickening even while I spoke)  
“ Let me alone ! No answer, pray,  
To this ! I know what Thou wilt say !  
All still is earth's,— to Know, as much  
As Feel its truths, which if we touch  
With sense, or apprehend in soul,  
What matter ? I have reached the goal —  
‘ Whereto does Knowledge serve !’ will burn  
My eyes, too sure, at every turn !  
I cannot look back now, nor stake  
Bliss on the race, for running's sake.  
The goal 's a ruin like the rest ! ” —  
— “ And so much worse thy latter quest,  
(Added the Voice) “ that even on earth —  
Whenever, in man's soul, had birth  
Those intuitions, grasps of guess,  
That pull the more into the less,  
Making the finite comprehend  
Infinity, — the bard would spend  
Such praise alone, upon his craft,  
As, when wind-lyres obey the waft,  
Goes to the craftsman who arranged  
The seven strings, changed them and rechanged —

Knowing it was the South that harped.  
He felt his song, in singing, warped ;  
Distinguished his and God's part : whence  
A world of spirit as of sense  
Was plain to him, yet not too plain,  
Which he could traverse, not remain  
A guest in :— else were permanent  
Heaven on earth, which its gleams were meant  
To sting with hunger for full light,—  
Made visible in verse, despite  
The veiling weakness, — truth by means  
Of fable, showing while it screens, —  
Since highest truth, man e'er supplied,  
Was ever fable on outside.  
Such gleams made bright the earth an age ;  
Now, the whole sun 's his heritage !  
Take up thy world, it is allowed,  
Thou who hast entered in the cloud ! ”

#### XXIX.

Then I — “ Behold, my spirit bleeds,  
Catches no more at broken reeds, —  
But lilies flower those reeds above :  
I let the world go, and take love !  
Love survives in me, albeit those  
I love be henceforth masks and shows,  
Not loving men and women : still  
I mind how love repaired all ill,  
Cured wrong, soothed grief, made earth amends

With parents, brothers, children, friends !  
Some semblance of a woman yet  
With eyes to help me to forget,  
Shall live with me ; and I will match  
Departed love with love, attach  
Its fragments to my whole, nor scorn  
The poorest of the grains of corn  
I save from shipwreck on this isle,  
Trusting its barrenness may smile  
With happy foodful green one day,  
More precious for the pains. I pray  
For love, then, only !”

## XXX.

At the word,  
The Form, I looked to have been stirred  
With pity and approval, rose  
O'er me, as when the headsman throws  
Axe over shoulder to make end —  
I fell prone, letting Him expend  
His wrath, while, thus, the inflicting Voice  
Smote me. “ Is this thy final choice ?  
Love is the best ? 'T is somewhat late !  
And all thou dost enumerate  
Of power and beauty in the world,  
The mightiness of love was curled  
Inextricably round about.  
Love lay within it and without,  
To clasp thee, — but in vain ! Thy soul

Still shrunk from Him who made the whole,  
Still set deliberate aside  
His love! — Now take love! — Well betide  
Thy tardy conscience! — Haste to take  
The show of love for the name's sake,  
Remembering every moment Who  
Beside creating thee unto  
These ends, and these for thee, was said  
To undergo death in thy stead  
In flesh like thine: so ran the tale.  
What doubt in thee could countervail  
Belief in it? — Upon the ground  
‘That in the story had been found  
Too much love! — How could God love *so?*’  
He who in all His works below  
Adapted to the needs of man,  
Made love the basis of the plan, —  
*Did* love, as was demonstrated:  
While man, who was so fit instead  
To hate, as every day gave proof, —  
Man thought man, for his kind's behoof,  
Both could and did invent that scheme  
Of perfect love — ‘t would well beseem  
Cain's nature thou wast wont to praise,  
Not tally with God's usual ways!”

## XXXI.

And I cowered deprecatingly —  
“Thou Love of God! — Or let me die,

Or grant what shall seem Heaven almost !  
 Let me not know that all is lost,  
 Though lost it be — leave me not tied  
 To this despair, this corpse-like bride !  
 Let that old life seem mine — no more —  
 With limitation as before,  
 With darkness, hunger, toil, distress :  
 Be all the earth a wilderness !  
 Only let me go on, go on,  
 Still hoping ever and anon  
 To reach one eve the Better Land ! ”

## XXXII.

Then did the Form expand, expand —  
 I knew Him through the dread disguise,  
 As the whole God within his eyes  
 Embraced me.

## XXXIII.

When I lived again,  
 The day was breaking, — the gray plain  
 I rose from, silvered thick with dew.  
 Was this a vision ? False or true ?  
 Since then, three varied years are spent,  
 And commonly my mind is bent  
 To think it was a dream — be sure  
 A mere dream and distemperature —  
 The last day’s watching : then the night, —  
 The shock of that strange Northern Light

Set my head swimming, bred in me  
 A dream. And so I live, you see,  
 Go through the world, try, prove, reject,  
 Prefer, still struggling to effect  
 My warfare ; happy that I can  
 Be crossed and thwarted as a man,  
 Not left in God's contempt apart,  
 With ghastly smooth life, dead at heart,  
 Tame in earth's paddock as her prize.  
 Thank God, she still each method tries  
 To catch me, who may yet escape,  
 She knows, the fiend in angel's shape !  
 Thank God, no paradise stands barred  
 To entry, and I find it hard  
 To be a Christian, as I said !  
 Still every now and then my head  
 Raised glad, sinks mournful — all grows drear  
 Spite of the sunshine, while I fear  
 And think, " How dreadful to be grudged  
 No ease henceforth, as one that 's judged,  
 Condemned to earth forever, shut  
 From Heaven ! "

But Easter-Day breaks ! But  
 Christ rises ! Mercy every way  
 Is infinite, — and who can say ?



43  
44  
59  
62  
119  
123  
133  
153  
152  
161  
193  
194



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